

# THE QUICK & THE DEAD



YEAR OF THE

HUNTER

# THE QUICK & THE DEAD

**And we are all mortal**

**—John F. Kennedy**

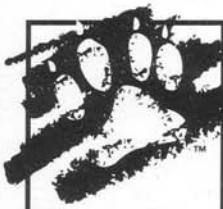
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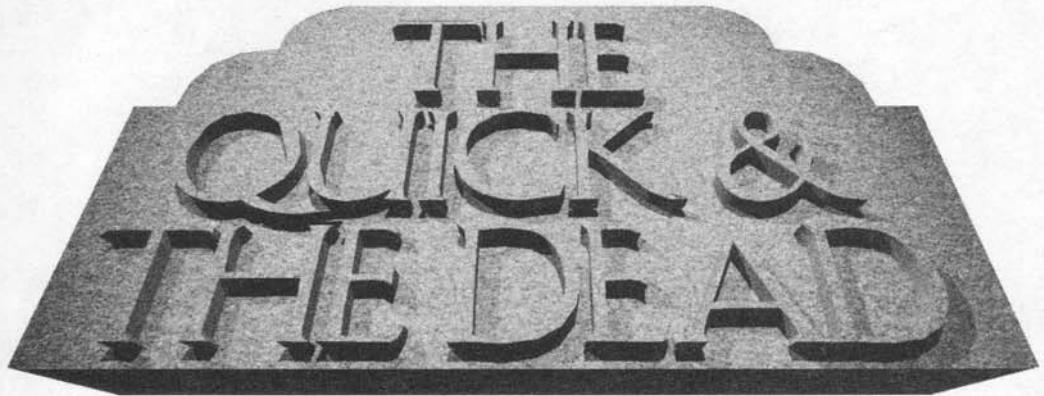
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Due to mature themes and subject matter, reader discretion is advised.

Author's Dedication:  
To Pook and Ariel, with love.



# **THE QUICK & THE DEAD**

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ELLIOTT 75

# Prelude: Visiting Rights

*Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a  
burnt offering?*

— Genesis 22: 7

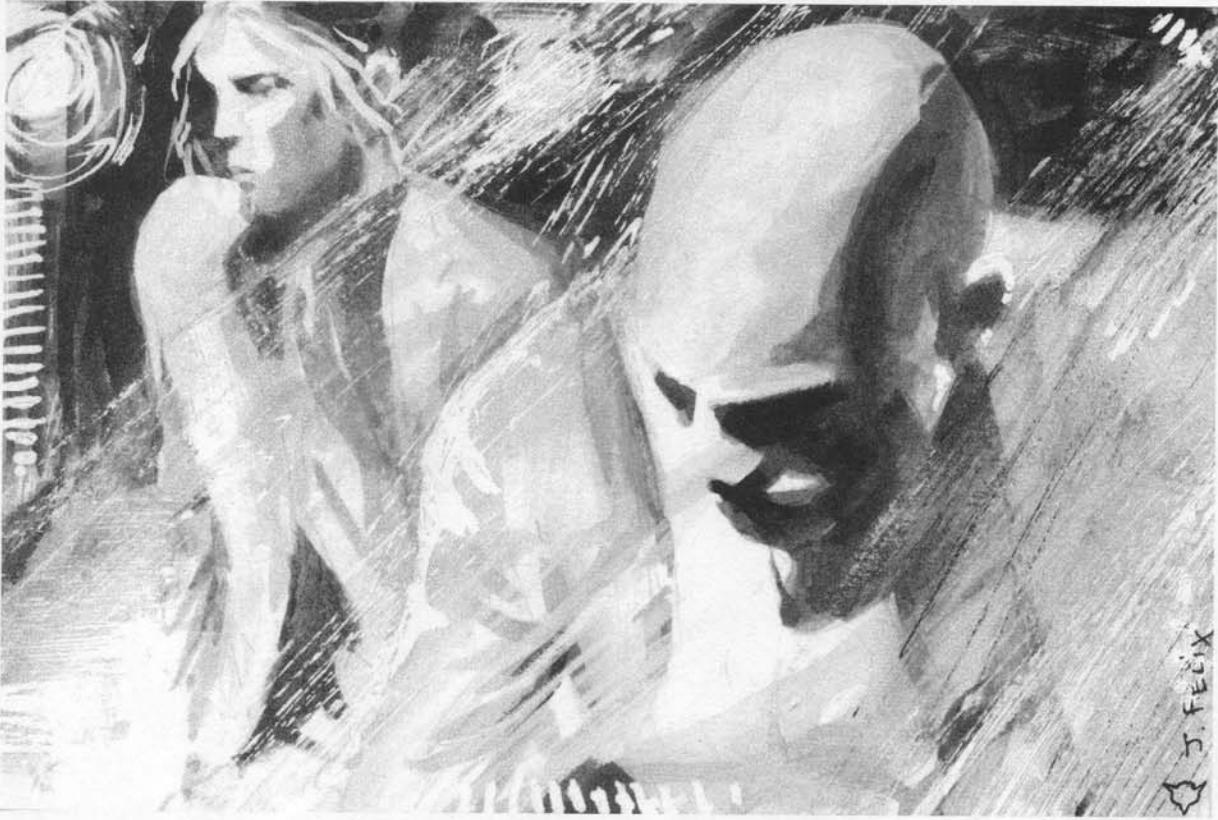


The solution was not an easy one, for a number of reasons. The doctors had counseled ardently against bringing Isaac home. He was a catatonic schizophrenic, they argued, and he required the constant supervision of a trained staff. His needs could not be met by the occasional attention of an oft-traveling family member. When Gorasczhy balked, they warned him, their faces masks of concern, that his son Isaac may experience frequent hallucinations, and might even become violent.

But, he thought hotly, the reason for this "occasional attention" and for all his traveling was precisely because he was trying to help Isaac. He had to remind himself that the doctors, with their expensive golf clubs and mahogany-framed credentials, could not possibly understand his motives for seeking to remove Isaac from the institution. Having traveled the world in search of a cure for his son's illness, he had seen many strange things, and heard tales even stranger. Yet, even after eleven years of such exposure — for what else could he call it? — the real cause of his son's illness was still the most bizarre of all. How, then, could these doctors even begin to understand why he wanted to bring his son home?

It was a simple conversation at the Café Mandela, in the small town of Sierra Leone, that led him to realize the terrifying solution to Isaac's problem. Gorasczhy stopped in Sierra Leone now and then, mostly when he needed to rest from his constant travels. He had many acquaintances there, numbering among the dock workers, the bartenders, and the poets on the west side of Freetown. But of all the places he frequented, Café Mandela was his favorite — not because of its strangely gloomy atmosphere, which, admittedly, often suited his mood, but because it was there that he habitually met Jabal ben-Shivta — or, more accurately, that Jabal habitually met him. Jabal had been a fixture at the Café ever three years back when it was still named Café Torbat, the "tomb" of the African west coast. Appropriately named, at that. Maybe it was the billowing nut trees whose knotted roots fragmented the hot sidewalk and threw the small, crowded outdoor patio into deep shade even at noon, or perhaps it was the greasy griddle and the cigar smoke clogging the heavy air within; or perhaps it was all these things that gave the café a surreal cast, reminding Gorasczhy of the spectral landscapes he walked from vespers to matins when the usual clues would not suffice.

On that day, he shuffled into the café, exhausted after a long sojourn through Istanbul, and noticed, little to his surprise, that Jabal was there, seated in a dark corner, and



staring at him through the crowd. Their conversation began as it always did, without pleasantries and without questions.

"An old Latvian crone once told me that those who strain to see too far beyond the horizon will go blind." Though Jabal's face betrayed no hint of emotion, his rich voice seemed to smile. The mere fact of his presence was as refreshing as the tang of a chilled African orange under the scorching sun at midday.

"Indeed? A Sudanese wiseman once confided to me that if he had not gone blind staring at the sun, he would never have truly seen."

Jabal nodded, appreciating the maneuver, then ran his palm along his dark cheek as if to signal a change of thought. "Do you not believe that if a lioness has been gored by her prey, then it is merciful for nature to take her life?"

A stray recollection of his sons at birth, his wife in shock from loss of blood, both infants blue and frighteningly quiet. *Are you the husband? She's hemorrhaging, Mr. Gorasczhy. Please wait outside.* "Yes, I suppose. It's better than the alternative." *Mr. Gorasczhy, I'm afraid she's suffered massive damage to the upper...to a hospital...failing rapidly...last respects...*

Jabal's eyes reflected his own, but darker, and with an ancient Syrian acceptance of suffering, decay, and death,

the pragmatism of which westerners would never master. "Is it not natural for those with feet to walk, those with ears to hear, those with eyes to see?"

Gorasczhy nodded once. "But what if those who had feet could not walk, and those who had eyes and ears could not see and hear?" He felt his heart skip a beat, frightened of the conclusion that was bearing down on him, the verdict that he was drawing like a Stygian coin from the lips of the sage.

"Then they would be unnatural and in need of mercy. It is a test of courage and love to practice mercy on the suffering." Jabal stared out over the heads of the café's patrons as he slid a smooth, cold hand over Gorasczhy's own. "Be well, brother. I will be here."

Jabal gathered his robes and rose with the grace of a cat. He nodded to Gorasczhy and, without another word, walked to the far end of the café and out into the merciful shade of the nut trees. The smoke and noise inside Café Mandela seemed to increase as he crossed the threshold. Gorasczhy rose to take a seat outside beneath the trees.

As he stood, however, something caught his eye: a book was sitting on the scarred chair across from him. The volume looked to be very old — the leather binding was dyed a deep blue, the pages were roughly cut, but had gilt edges. In gold gothic lettering, the title read *Gástas, Feorhcwalu, and Ferhp-ze-riht*. He picked it up; it weighed a good

five pounds. Had Jabal left this for him? Or had he simply forgotten it? It was not like Jabal to forget things; in fact, his recall of their many conversations was chillingly precise. Was this, then, an offering of some sort?

That was two years ago. When he had returned to Tennafly, at once after visiting Isaac at St. Anselm's, he sent the book to his friend, a Classics professor at Kenyon, for translation. The translation was not long in the coming; Jack Ferguson was ecstatic over the rare (career-making) find — a copy of what must have been a huge manuscript written circa 780, during the reign of Charlemagne. The copy itself dated from around 1628, he said, and it was in unusually good condition. The gilt edges, an extremely rare feature, probably indicated that the book had been a copy produced for a nobleman of some wealth, or perhaps even a king. Although Goraszch had taken some Old English in college, he did not remember enough of it to translate the title; Ferguson's literal translation read *Spirits, Slaughter, and What is Right for the Spirit*, although, he suggested, the title might be more appropriately translated: *Ghosts, Death, and a Spirit's Just Reward*.

The title immediately caught Goraszch's interest. In the course of his search for a cure for Isaac, he had begun to explore the spiritual realm. It was not a blind impulse that led him to this avenue of inquiry; rather, his interest in the occult stemmed from as far back as his childhood in Rochester, New York. Over the years he had come to realize that, if medicine could not sufficiently explain his son's ailment, then he must seek a spiritual answer. This belief may have been, he reflected, a natural outcome of his Benandanti heritage — a heritage which had taught him how to enter Ekstasis from sundown to sunup, and from which he had evolved a natural reverence for the occult.

Isaac was Benandante, too, for Goraszch had managed to Unhood his son at birth despite the tragedy that came in its wake. After his wife, Sarah, and Benjamin, Isaac's twin, had died in childbirth, he stowed his surviving son's caul in a delicate porcelain jewelry box, one that had been Sarah's favorite when she was alive — a poor choice, he realized, for he now suspected that Isaac's "catatonia" was a sort of possession, and that it was related to the disappearance of the caul from that very box. One day, he lifted the delicate lid of the jewelry box to look at the tiny infant's hood — more delicate than the porcelain he was handling and precious enough to belong inside — and it was simply not there. Cauls had a spiritual reflection in the Underworld, appearing as small gossamer shrouds, but when Goraszch peered into the Underworld around him, he did not see any trace of the one that had belonged to Isaac.

In the following weeks, he decided to abandon the house in which Isaac had been born — a house with too many memories, anyway — and embark upon a search for his son's caul. He would not sell the house, for he feared that it was possessed by evil spirits. Instead, he boarded it up and moved to his aunt's house in nearby Tennafly. He

began to travel, researching Benandanti history, the Underworld, evil spirits, the paranormal, and a host of other possible leads. During these travels, he kept meticulous notes of his voyages, both physical and spiritual, of the ghosts that he had encountered, and of the strange societies and organizations about which he'd heard rumors.

Now, ten years into his quest, he'd been handed this very book, written in Old English, which explained the dangerous nature of ghosts (an observation he was inclined to believe anyway) and how to bestow peace upon their troubled souls. There were a number of inaccuracies, but one chapter, written in a style that was different from the rest, described in precise detail the symptoms of Isaac's illness. The author went on to exhort the reader to find the mercy in his heart to sacrifice the afflicted, for they would be forever bereft of their souls, unless they were allowed to become ghosts themselves to engage their possessors in a battle for freedom. The passage concluded with a line from Beowulf: *Ure æghwylc sceal ende gebidan worolde lifes*, "Each of us must abide the end of earthly life."

Yet, every time he guiltily considered it — it, killing Isaac, releasing his spirit — even if in a flash of speculative thought, he feared that he was going insane. At the same time, he could see no alternative, and the life that Isaac was leading now was, indeed, no life at all.

What it all came down to was the fact that he loved his son. Though a mass of unintended emotion, guilt, fear, excitement and rage hovered around that central pillar, nothing could change his love for Isaac. It was never his intention to harm his son in any way. Yet, forced to choose between the lesser of two evils, he had to determine, ultimately, whether his son was a being of flesh or a being of spirit. He would have to release his son from one of the two realms, for, according to his research, Isaac's composite life — and this was one hypothesis the doctors had gotten right — would eventually lead him to violent behavior and dangerously unfettered emotion.

Thus, that night he left his son at St. Anselm's for the last time and drove past their old house on King's View Road, east into the rising darkness. When he arrived at Briarwood Lane, the cul-de-sac on which his old two-story Tudor sat — the old, hated house where his wife and son had died, where Isaac's soul had slipped away — he felt an unbidden apprehension rising, as if the whole street were glaring at him, the unwelcome stranger. He would return here tomorrow night with Isaac and end the trial they had been enduring for these past twelve years.

The following night, he parked his Toyota at the very end of the street, away from the yellow pools of light the lamps cast upon the pavement. The street was quiet, save for the muted clanking of cookware being cleared from dinner tables and handwashed in kitchen sinks. Goraszch carefully lifted Isaac out of the car; like a lamb, Isaac slouched mutely in his father's arms, oblivious to the dark,

the cold, even to Gorasczhy's presence. Gorasczhy crept down the street to his old property, then slipped around to the back of the house as quietly as he could. The lawn was full of weeds and overgrown, and the dry autumn leaves crackled under his feet as he walked, but he was sure no one had heard him. He set Isaac down gently, turned on his flashlight, and climbed the stairs to the deck. Stepping carefully over rotted beams, he reached the plywood board that sealed the sliding doors to the house. The deck was an addition he had put on himself, over Sarah's protests — she had argued that it would ruin the Tudor's "lines." At the moment, it was the easiest and most private means to gain entrance. He needed to get Isaac inside out of the cold wind, and to prepare him for his release.

The nails holding the plywood were stubborn, yielding only millimeter by millimeter. The wind picked up as Gorasczhy worked, and, although the Tudor sheltered the deck to some extent, it was not enough to keep Gorasczhy's fingers from quickly growing numb. There was a part of him that wanted to abandon the whole thing, to pick Isaac up and carry him back to the car, and sleep at King's Hill in a warm house with his newly reunited family nearby. Twelve years had been a long time. While he couldn't claim to know his son, for Isaac almost never spoke (and when he did, it was sometimes in a foreign language), he loved Isaac for being the legacy of the union between himself and Sarah. His son was a reminder of better times, and he had the potential within him to create those times again, if only Gorasczhy could free him. With redoubled effort, Gorasczhy yanked at the nail and slowly pulled it free of the wood. Suddenly he was rocked by guilt and fear, as though he were opening a forbidden tomb; but, if it was, indeed, a tomb that he was entering, it was one into which he had to release Isaac.

When the last of the nails yielded, the plywood board swung free of the sliding doors. Gorasczhy leaned it against the deck railing, found the key to the door, unlocked it, and slid it open. Lifting Isaac, he entered what was once the dining room. The house smelled musty and damp, and somehow it was even colder indoors than it was out in the wind. Gorasczhy did not mind the cold, however. He was thinking of old times, of his marriage, the way the house had looked when he and Sarah first moved in. "See, Isaac," he said, turning around to give his unseeing son a better view. "This is where your mother and I used to eat dinner and talk about what we would do when we had you." He pointed the flashlight into the dust-shrouded living room, beyond which was the hall that led to the baby's room. "And there's where you used to sleep."

When Gorasczhy carried Isaac into his old room, the memories of playing with Isaac as an infant, the wondering eyes, the clumsy smiles, the grumpy pouts, the little fist squeezing his finger with more strength than he would have thought possible, all came flooding back. He stood there for a moment, forgetting the son he now held in his arms, the

possession, the fact that he was about to follow Isaac into the Underworld to help destroy the ghost who had stolen his caul.

The large crib that he and Sarah had purchased for the twins was still there. When he moved out, Isaac was already in St. Anselm's, and his wife and Benjamin dead; Gorasczhy hadn't had the optimism to take the crib with him. But now he realized that Isaac would probably still fit in it. He put his son down and unlatched the rail, then picked him up again and stretched him out on the soft, musty mattress. As he set the rail back in place, he thought that now, Isaac looked less an infant than a prisoner.

Before he could begin to consider anew what he was doing, he pulled a plastic bottle from his coat pocket and tapped out eleven green tablets. Phemerol, 100 milligrams each. A fatal dosage for an adult was 800 to 1,000 milligrams of the barbiturate; he wanted no room for error. He would send Isaac gently into a realm where half of him already dwelled.

• • •

The winds howled in Isaac's ears, and strange words began to reverberate through his mind, snatches of poetry recited by others who had run across him in this tempest, or fragments of conversation he'd heard unseen ghosts whispering one to another. The voices in his mind grew louder until they seemed to coalesce into a command that echoed repeatedly through his head like a chant: *Prevent it. Prevent IT. PREVENT IT.* A frightening image of an ancient ghost with tawny eyes appeared in his mind.

The winds began to recede, the nightmare shapes becoming nebulous and his human senses returning. Usually, touch and hearing came first, then smell, and finally sight. This time, though, he felt an unaccustomed sensation in his mouth first, a strong, bitter taste coating his tongue and the back of his throat. His stomach also felt strange, sending a flash of cold panic to his brain. Though his mind was racing, he began to breathe heavily and slowly, his heart straining to push blood to his head. Isaac felt his father's hand on his own, its warmth flooding his body. His father's other hand covered Isaac's eyes, and the warmth began to seep into him there, too. His body felt heavier than it had ever felt in his waking moments.

"Isaac?" His father's voice trembled with an emotion Isaac could not identify. "You still with me, kid? There's something I must tell you." A pause. Isaac summoned all his strength, the way he would when he tried to comprehend the confusing mass of voices and impressions on the Other Side. Feebly, he squeezed his father's hand. Returning the gesture, his father said, "Kid, I'm releasing you, and I'm going to help you find the bast — evil spirit — that did this to you, and we're going to get even with him, hear me, kid? We're going to get even. This time I'm following you. We're going to confront this sunufabitch and we're going to send him straight to Hell." He paused again, sounding

unsteady, unsure whether he had an audience. "That's it. Keep your eyes closed. Sleep. It's OK. I'm going to meet you in a moment, and you can show me where it is you go."

Isaac felt himself drifting off, no longer perceiving the unfamiliar smell of the room or the chill of the air. His senses faded and, as they did, the voice returned, screeching like a banshee, *PREPARE IT, PREPARE IT!* Around him was a whirlwind of distorted faces, all the usual faire...except one. In the distance, he caught a glimpse of a face that was different from the rest. It stared at him from afar, obscured now and then by the contorted limbs and faces that flew by like a roiling stormcloud. The face seemed familiar somehow, as if he had known the person at some point in the distant past. He started toward it before it could disappear.

At that moment, a female figure stepped out of the same nightmare mass like a queen onto a royal dais, her persona a regal blend of composure and strength. She wore an odd expression on her face, as if she knew who he was. Isaac did not recognize her, but he recognized the glint of anger and madness in her eye. He had looked upon Spectres before, their faces masks of fury, their wills, daggers that sparked from their gleaming eyes. There was no reason in them, only the desire to destroy; he could converse with them, but words, however elaborate or soothing, were to them simply tools of destruction.

The Spectre floated toward him, and he backed away — his familiarity with Spectres no impediment to fear. Behind her, he again caught a glimpse of the face that somehow seemed familiar. The owner, hands fending off the dark spirits within the whirling cloud, was trying unsuccessfully to breach the storm to reach him. The shades circled above him like vultures around carrion, dipping closer and closer with each successive swoop, their nebulous forms radiating the cold black phosphorescence of the blasphemous pit they called home. Like sharks, when one had caught the scent of blood, others soon followed, and then still others, until there was a flurry of more than forty of them circling the stranger. Oddly, the stranger did not seem to be frightened, as most spirits were who came from Outside. This gave Isaac confidence. He wanted to call out to him, but knew that he would not be heard above the Tempest's fury. Meanwhile, the female Spectre, only a few yards from Isaac, paid no heed to the stranger, either because she had not noticed him, or because she considered him to be beneath her notice.

A mistake. The dark figure loomed larger behind her, ignoring the horned tentacles lashing out from the shades, and brushing away those that landed on him like mosquitoes prepared to quench their thirst. This was not the figure that Isaac had glimpsed at first; this was someone powerful, someone fearless.

Suddenly, the Spectre glanced past Isaac, her fury evident on her face, and in her clenched fists. Isaac glanced

behind him and saw a third figure, but could not make out who it was.

"My God, Isaac," it cried. "Isaac — it's me, your father! Get out of here!" The obscured figure behind him moved closer until Isaac recognized his father's face. "This place will kill us!" Even as he said it, Isaac noticed the small, oozing tentacle wounds that the shades had inflicted on him. He was hunched over, exhausted by the exertion of remaining on his feet, teeth chattering from the cold.

Isaac ran to him, fleeing the Spectre who held out her arms and continued to approach like an inescapable nightmare. He clung to his father, not knowing what else to do.

"Isaac, Isaac," Gorasczhy said, returning the embrace, "...you let me down!" Isaac looked up at his father, puzzled, then shocked. His face had changed its shape, becoming that of the female Spectre. She had her arms wrapped tightly about him now, and he could not extract himself. The other Spectre was still approaching, and behind her, the dark, powerful figure. His captor backed away, caressing Isaac's head, and licked her lips. She bent down to hiss in his ear, "My love, your father is mine. The wretch has stolen your body from you; now I will steal his soul from him!"

• • •

Had Isaac spent his childhood in this bleak pit? Gorasczhy could not help but wonder what his minor oversight had cost his son.

He could just barely see Isaac ahead of him, embraced by one of the fiends that lived in this hellish underworld. It was clear that Isaac had his cauldron with him. How he'd obtained it, Gorasczhy did not know, but it was as if Isaac had never been Unhooded, for the opaque cauldron covered his entire head like a hood on a falcon. Gorasczhy knew that he had to remove the Hood so that Isaac could see; if he could do that, then he could guard the cauldron safely this time. But was it not said that the transition into death provided the traveler with a second cauldron, the cauldron of death? In vain, Gorasczhy sifted through vague memories of years of research.

But first he had to tend to his own wounds. He needed rest, despite his desire to help Isaac, but his time here was limited, for he could only stay in spirit form until sunup. Longer than that, and he would be trapped here indefinitely...but perhaps that was a small price to pay for a mistake that had cost Isaac his childhood.

With increasing anxiety, Gorasczhy realized that the Spectres' predatory circles were tightening in anticipation of the kill. Though he had had no time to rest, he considered running after Isaac, when suddenly a dark figure, seemingly untouched by the evil spirits around it, strode past Gorasczhy and stopped. It was eight feet tall and wore a black cloak with a deep, cowled hood, the edges of which the wind licked gently. Wisps of gossamer material trailed behind it, falling lightly to the ground as it drew

to a halt, a subtle reminder of the figure's spiritual nature, even though it seemed more solid than anything Gorasczhy had yet seen in the Tempest. Too weak even to hail the stranger, Gorasczhy simply stared and gripped the rood he had carried with him into this den of fiends, an article of faith the ancient Benandante Jean-Paul Baptiste had loaned him for this occasion.

The shadowed hood swung toward him, revealing the clenched jaw and slender features of an aged woman. A large, knotted hand pointed at his rood. "Put that away. It is useless here." She made a sharp gesture, and the rood flew from Gorasczhy's hand as if yanked by some unseen force. "Give me your hand." Her voice was powerful and low, like the rumble of a lioness.

Although Gorasczhy was not terribly inclined to obey, neither was he strong enough to resist. The ghost bent to retrieve him, swinging him onto her back as easily as if he were a child. In that moment, the circling shades, bereft of their prize, shrieked with jealous rage. Without a backward glance, the ghost started walking again, moving with long, confident strides toward Isaac and his captor.

Gorasczhy, weak and frightened, clung to the ghost's chill essence. As if sensing his emotions, the ghost whispered, "Fear not, mortal. I shall retrieve your son, whom you have sentenced to this world, and I shall care for him. I wish him no harm." Before Gorasczhy could reply, she added, "And I will hold his cauldron for him this time."

Gorasczhy was startled by how much she seemed to know. Could the Underworld have spies? Among the Benandanti, ghosts were notorious for their wickedness and cunning; could this somehow be a ruse, a dangerous game of wits, the stakes of which were his son's soul?

"And why should I trust you?" he finally replied.

"I am a Ferryman," she stated simply. "If you do not trust me, you may try your luck with the thirsty shades who have gathered to feed on you. But by my word, your son will be safe, even if you are sent screaming into Oblivion."

Made nervous by her reply, Gorasczhy decided he would play the game more carefully until he felt stronger. "Please, you must understand: it would help me if you would explain why that ghost has abducted him," he said, pointing weakly to Isaac's captor, who was backing away as if preparing to bolt.

"I will tell you if you promise one thing."

Here it is, thought Gorasczhy, here is where she attempts to make her unholy pact with me. With much misgiving, he asked, "And what is that?"

"You must bind your cauldron with the promise to come to my assistance whenever I hail your spirit," she replied, her voice the rumbling purr of a panther.

Gorasczhy almost laughed. "You ask a great deal, don't you think?"

Gorasczhy felt the ghostly shoulder muscles ripple beneath him as she shrugged and looked behind them,

where the shades continued to circle. "I will leave you here, then, to ponder the answers to your own questions." She started to let Gorasczhy drop to the ground, but he clung to her like a child. "What, do you not wish to think on it, then?" her voice mocked him.

Curbing his anger, he managed to deflect the question. "What sort of 'assistance' do the Dead require? Corrupting the innocent? Damning the weak?"

Her silent laughter was like the wind rustling dry leaves. "Nothing of the sort, my naïve Benandante. You have much to learn."

Starting into an effortless run, she decreased the distance between them and Isaac's captor. "I am a Ferryman," she whispered, and the winds seemed to pick up her words, hissing them as if in chorus. "We help ghosts, not harm them...and rarely do we have truck with mortals. We neither corrupt nor damn. We patrol this Tempest for the lost and guide the unlost to their destinations. The assistance I ask of you is aid only the Quick can give: there is information that is available only in the Skinlands — excuse me, in the world of the *living* — that will be useful in our fight against these fiends." She nodded in the direction of Isaac's fleeing captor.

"And how do I know that what you're saying is the truth?"

"My actions must speak for themselves. But, if you are still unsure after we retrieve your boy, I will ensure that his cauldron is properly removed a second time, and then I will return it to you and instruct you on its safekeeping."

Gorasczhy sensed sincerity in the ghost's promise, but was not won over. His *sapienza* had told him again and again not to trust the Dead, that they could appear to be honest even while they seethed with deceit. That they put mortals in precisely this position and then betrayed them was common knowledge. Yet, the Ferryman — if such titles really existed and she was not lying to him about that, too — had promised to free Isaac, and he had few other alternatives. Until she delivered his son, he would not make any promises, but neither would he pose any hindrances.

"I will wait to observe your actions, then."

The Ferryman nodded and pushed forward, slowly gaining on the ghost that ran before them. None of the spirits in this "Tempest," as she called it, seemed to want to confront the Ferryman directly, although the cowardly beasts would lash out at Gorasczhy from behind as she passed through cloud after cloud of the creatures.

After what seemed like hours of running, the Ferryman finally caught up to the fiend. Gorasczhy glimpsed Isaac's cauldron, placed over his head like a sack and tied around his neck with some ethereal substance. He looked like a prisoner of war as he was marched off to be shot in the head. His captor held his wrists firmly behind him and shoved him forward, desperately fleeing the Ferryman with her quarry. Gorasczhy knew that the cauldron was obscuring

Isaac's perception of this place; he certainly didn't recognize Gorasczhy, and seemed, even, to be frightened of him.

But the Ferryman did not stop to consider Isaac. As soon as she was close enough, she allowed Gorasczhy to slip to the ground, where he lay unable to move. As she lifted her long arms above her head, the sleeves of her cloak fell back to reveal heavy scars. White mist rose from the ground, parting the Tempest's miasma and enveloping her, Gorasczhy, Isaac, and the Spectre in an opaque shell. Gorasczhy could see neither the Spectre nor Isaac any longer, but an unearthly howl of rage echoed around him, sending a chill down his spine. He heard movement, then a terrible rending sound, and he feared that Isaac had been hurt. But all he could see was the Ferryman's receding figure. Tottering to his feet, he staggered after her, groping blindly in the thick white mist.

His heart pounding, he ventured a bit further.

Silence.

A bit further.

Suddenly, a huge black talon ripped through the mist and came toward him. He couldn't react. It sunk into his chest and jerked away, tearing off a huge chunk of flesh.

In shock, he fell backward, howling, pressing his hands over his wounded gut. The looming black figure of the Ferryman appeared indistinctly and the talon coiled back through the mist toward her. Gorasczhy wondered whether he would remain here if he died in this moment.

And then he noticed another black figure, identical in appearance to the Ferryman, approaching through the mist from his left. It gave a demonic hiss and its tawny eyes flared with balefire. "Leave the mortal. He is mine."

The other whipped its talon around to strike, but the first Ferryman raised an arm and the talon fell lifeless to the ground. "Sssssarah...leave this game to me. I am the better ssuited for it."

Sarah? That was his wife's name, but it had to be mere coincidence. Perhaps it was another Sarah. Perhaps he was in shock, just imagining this.

"No, Jabal, they are both *mine*...you cannot take everything from me twice." A vile green fluid like vomit shot from the hood of the Ferryman on Gorasczhy's right. A drop of it spattered onto Gorasczhy's hand, hissing and popping. He brushed it away quickly as it began to eat through his skin like acid. The figure on his left was not so quick; a stream of fluid struck the Ferryman's hood, melting the cloth and scarring her face.

Gorasczhy could not understand what was going on. First the name Sarah, then Jabal — Jabal ben-Shivta? This must be some sort of hallucination. Perhaps Gorasczhy *was* dying, after all. He glanced down at his bloody shirt and hands, and felt panic rising. It could not be Jabal...Jabal was not eight feet tall and he did not have a woman's voice.



Despite her injury, the scarred Ferryman continued to bargain. "Give me my sssson, and I give you your hussband. That's what you want, after all."

Gorasczhy blinked. Her son? What did she mean "her son?" Perhaps this was the ghost of a schizophrenic, someone who didn't quite have it together in life and still didn't in death. But what about this 'Sarah'?

The "Sarah" Ferryman circled closer to Gorasczhy through the mist, moving Isaac just barely into sight. He was uninjured, and stood placidly, as if he could not hear what was going on.

"You may have given me Isaac, but you took him away again, and Zeke and Benjie along with him, you murderer. You murdered me! You betrayed Isaac! I will not bargain with my killer!" With that, the shade's solid body melted into a seething dark form that seemed to swallow the ambient light. Gorasczhy was pulled into it, his body inching across the ground toward the spectral thing as if being sucked by a vacuum. Droplets of his blood rolled, then began to fly, horizontally into the dark circle. Isaac disappeared into it. The fringes of his dark cloak whipping toward the form, "Jabal" also began to inch closer to her.

Gorasczhy strained to resist, but the more he struggled, the weaker he became. He was losing blood — or what passed for blood here in the Underworld — quickly now. He made one last desperate attempt to pull away, but failed. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw a white flare cut through the encompassing mist, then he lost consciousness.

• • •

The bright shock of self-consciousness flooded Gorasczhy's brain, a split second of absolute solipsism in which he felt as if the world existed only because he was aware of it. The world was white — pure, perfect, painted white. It was smooth, abstract, flawless, seeming immaterial, of spirit rather than substance.

Then Gorasczhy came to, his mind grasping the whiteness, understanding it to be a ceiling. There was an

edge, a gray line indicating a boundary, then a wall, then a black form against the wall....

A black form!

His vision cleared...the shape, he realized as it came into focus, was a hospital nurse. He sighed with relief. The sound drew the nurse's attention, and she walked over to his bed.

"Mr. Gorasczhy, you're awake! How are you feeling?"

Gorasczhy found himself unable to respond. A horrible pain in his stomach seemed to suck the breath from his lungs.

"That's OK. Just relax." The nurse picked up a clipboard from the table next to his bed. "You know, you're lucky to be alive. They haven't found that psychopath yet, but you'll be one of the first to know when they do."

What psychopath? What was she talking about? Gorasczhy groaned. "Isaaaac..."

"Shhh, shhh, Mr. Gorasczhy. Just lie still." The nurse smoothed his bedsheets, then turned to fill a glass with water.

"What happened...to Isaac?" Gorasczhy gasped. "Isaac!"

The nurse kept her back to Gorasczhy. "Someone needs to talk to you about him, don't they?" she mumbled and shook her head. Then, turning around, she said more brightly, "Someone left you a get-well note. It's right here. Would you like to look at it?"

Gorasczhy managed a nod. The nurse put on a fake, bright smile, as she opened the envelope and handed him the note.

It did not look anything like a get-well card. The handwriting was strange; the letters were carefully scribed, as though the author had written in a language that was foreign to him, yet the note also looked to have been hastily scrawled.

Ezekiel,

Gone Isaac is not, although if thou desired to converse with him, thou must needs hearken unto me. Believest thou me when I say, the Döpplegangers appeared unto thee before I could reach thee. Nonetheless, I do promise that I mean to do thee and Isaac no harm. Find me when thy wounds have healed, and together we will search for thy son. But before thou do, promiseth thou me one thing; as I have saved thy soul, now thou art found owing to save the souls of those who hath helped thee escape the Tempest. To this end, we have bound thee, with thy caul, to discover all the learning thou canst concerning those who hurt us. Despite thy experience here, souls there be who mean and do only good, and we are they. Fear us not then, for we have vowed to use your learning for the benefit of the innocent alone. Heal, and cometh thou unto us when thou hast accomplished thy task.

Thy Friend,  
Ferryman Hekton Schultemann

Gorasczhy read the note, folded it carefully and returned it to the nurse, who slid it back into the envelope. Isaac — alive? "Ferrymen" and "Doppelgangers?" Was any of this really true?

The nurse placed the envelope beside Gorasczhy's bed along with the glass of water, and left to continue her rounds. Alone now, Gorasczhy lay and pondered his situation. He could not move for the burning pain that seared across his chest and stomach. His right hand was also scarred, as if the flesh had been eaten away. What had happened to him in the Underworld? And how did the events there resonate through to this physical realm? How much power did the Spectre truly have?

Those Doppelgangers — were they Sarah and Jabal, or was that an illusion? Were the spirits using those names just to wound him further? If, in fact, that Spectre had been Sarah, what had caused her to become so twisted, so evil? Was Isaac really his son, or was that, too, a lie? What had the Spectre named Jabal done to the ghost of Sarah? And could he trust this "Hektor"?

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, What had his life become?

Slowly, an answer came to him, although he was not sure if he should dare to believe it: His life was nothing more, and nothing less, than a tribute to death, a harbinger to that final descent into a new reality. Even as he lived, he was slowly dying, and with each moment, his knowledge grew, knowledge, surely, that would stay with him when his physical body ceased to function, when he finally crossed death's inevitable door. In the meantime, his life had become a process of information harvesting, a rite of passage that, like the most profound of rituals, demanded a blood sacrifice and the loss of innocence that was a part of living. Somehow, he had won visiting rights to the surface, but he realized now that his life was not his own. Nor was any mortal's.

With that thought still lingering in the edges of his mind, Gorasczhy drifted into a deep, dreamless sleep.





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# Chapter One: Introduction



ust as the Quick have pioneers of space, time, and matter, so they have pioneers of the spirit. Since the first dark discovery of their own mortality, human beings have been fascinated by the world of the spirit. Through us, they have sought to understand their relation to the universe.

Through us, they have sought to escape the inevitability of their own demise. We represent humankind's deepest fears, as well as their highest hopes — the threat of Oblivion and the promise of eternal life. Because our very nature resonates with the profoundest impulses within the human psyche, it is only natural that mortals want to use our existence as a tool to plumb those depths, to discover themselves.

This book is a compilation of the knowledge I have gathered about those living spirit-pioneers. In it, you will discover that many of them are dangerous — foes who misunderstand us, and, I am afraid, foes who understand us only too well. But not all are foes; many of those who establish contact with the Underworld seek knowledge, or power, or forgiveness for the wrongs they have done an inhabitant here. Their reasons are as many and varied as ours for what we do.

Read this, then, and understand.

— The Ferryman Regina

## How to Use This Book



here are many forces at work in the World of Darkness, forces that wish to uncover or put to final rest the secrets of the Underworld, for reasons as varied as the hunters who comprise them. *The Quick and the Dead* paints a portrait of these hunters, their organizations, and their stories. From parapsychologists, Victorian spiritualists, modern channelers and secret government agents to religious hunters, foes and worshippers, *The Quick and the Dead* pierces the veil covering those whose eyes pierce the Fog. Using this book, you can create "pioneers of the spirit" to play in your own story settings, or to use as background characters or organizations in your ongoing chronicles. Sidebars offer interesting trivia and additional information on individual hunters and organizations.

Playing a hunter rather than an all-powerful creature of the Underworld is a challenge. Mortal hunters must depend primarily upon their deductive and reasoning abilities rather than upon an ability to Castigate their way out of the Inferno, and this requires skill, intelligence, and patience on the part of the player. Ultimately, however, it is a rewarding experience. Playing the hunter will allow you to explore the world of the Dead one tantalizing discovery at a time. You will be able to participate in the drama of the Restless from the other side — your own side. You may even have the chance to plumb the depths of your own mortality. And if you are a Storyteller, you can add richness and depth to your chronicle by involving the Quick in deep plots and tangled emotional dramas. So what are you waiting for? Let the hunt begin...

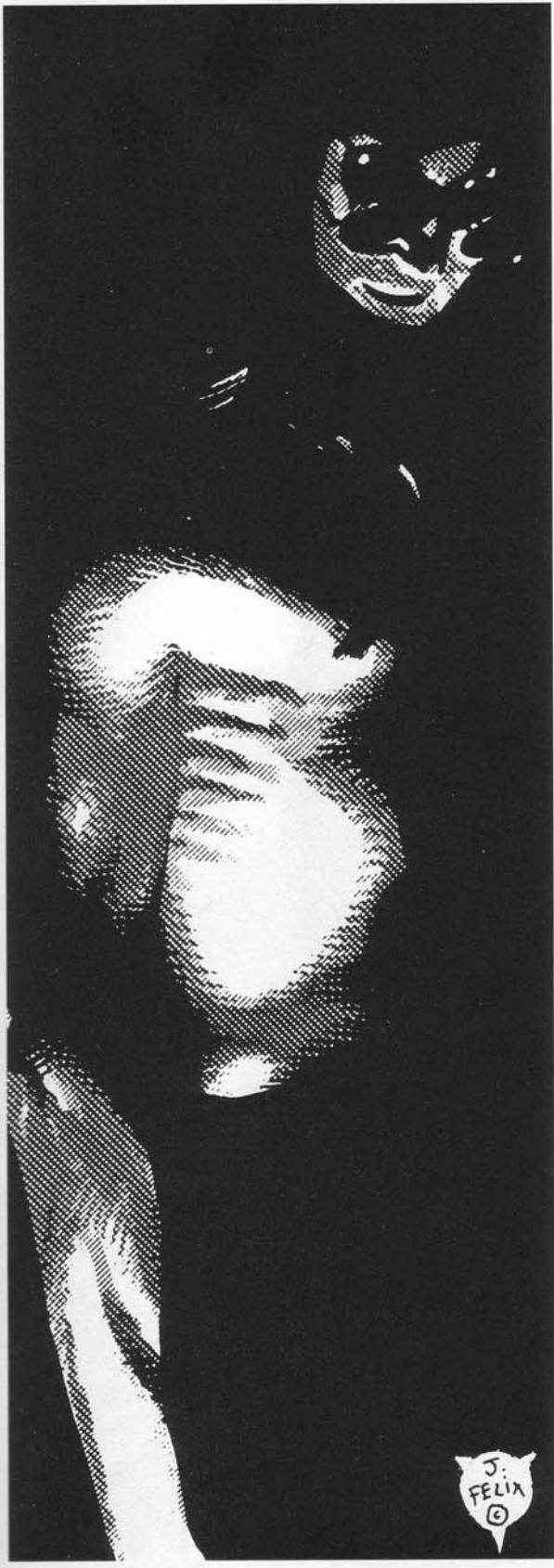
## The Players



Just as wraiths form organizations based upon common goals or experiences, so too do the wraith-seeking Quick, be they hunters, scholars, politicians, or hedonists. Organizations formed for the purposes of contacting, hunting, or destroying the Restless may be rigidly or loosely structured, they may be exclusive, or may accept entities other than humans into their ranks. Necromancy, immortality, exotic pleasure, self-discovery, and mere curiosity are some of the common organizing principles around which wraith-hunters rally.

Organizations dedicated to such goals bestow many benefits upon these "club members": physical, psychological, and financial support, library privileges, weapons, ghost traps, an oral or written tradition of knowledge, enhanced experience, contacts, atmosphere, and even just good company. Still, members also consistently complain of problems, ranging from red tape, oppressive hierarchy, egos, selfishness, and favoritism to heretics, traitors, and spies. There are even some organizations that, like cults, refuse to allow members to leave or even to retire. Because of this benefit-to-disadvantage ratio, organizations can fuel a good deal of dramatic conflict, whether players play members of these hunting clubs, or the Storyteller creates them as antagonists, interests, or background characters.





The following four chapters detail some better-known organizations of the wraith-seeking Quick in the World of Darkness. Grouped according to the fundamental, or stated, goal of each organization, the descriptions of these “clubs” provide a brief history, membership criteria, and other data relevant to the creation of members for play. Keep in mind, however, that most social constructs are malleable and thus these descriptions should be considered clay in the hands of the Storyteller. (If you want to create organizations of your own, see Chapter 5: Organization Creation.) Remember, too, that members sometimes find themselves piercing the façade constructed by their organization only to discover some very ugly truths.



# Chapter Two: The Hunters

*One must restrain a violent spirit, and keep it within bounds, and trustworthy to men, pure in its ways.*

— “The Seafarer,” an Old English poem



To some extent, all those who seek out wraiths are “hunting” them. However, the organizations that actively “hunt” wraiths generally either intend to destroy them or do not care if they are destroyed. Such organizations differ from those who interact with ghosts without harming them.

## The Knowledge Seekers



I am happy to report that not all those who contact the Restless have destructive intentions. Many simply wish to learn more about the spirit world before they condemn it. I am not saying that every such “seeker of knowledge” studies the Underworld without prejudice, just that they carry a spark of trust, however small, in their hearts, and this prevents them from blindly annihilating anything remotely equated with a ghost. — E. G.

While organizations devoted to understanding the Underworld — and sometimes the occult in general — differ in many ways, they nevertheless share an appreciation of the information gleaned from contact with it.

Sometimes these organizations work together to discover occult lore; more often, however, they either compete with one another, or remain ignorant of other seekers’ current projects.

Most knowledge-seeking organizations have complex motivations for hunting the Restless and may ultimately use their knowledge for some purpose, whether good or ill. For the time being, however, knowledge is their primary goal. Described here are the most cohesive, and therefore the most successful, of the knowledge-seeking organizations of ghosthunters.

### The Benandanti

Toward the end of the first millennium, a large percentage of Italian Gypsy babies were born with their cauls still intact, traditionally a sign that the child would be blessed with good fortune, precognition, protection from harm, or the ability to communicate with the dead. Benandanti history records that the large Gypsy family Maldonati discovered that the caul was a *mule-vi*; it could grant even greater powers than those with which it was traditionally associated.

The Maldonati soon became *Padroni del Amnio*, Masters of the Caul, from whom anyone, Gypsy and gorgio (outsider) alike, could learn their secrets — for a price.

Because the knowledge became so highly prized in Italy among those few who believed in the power of the caul, the price of such knowledge became incrementally steeper, until the Padroni commanded slavelike apprenticeships and complete loyalty from anyone wishing to learn how to use his caul. Naturally, such abuse of power led to great animosity and set the stage for an inevitable revolt.

The Maldonati family had grown too powerful, its fortunes rivaling the riches of the feudal lords through whose lands its *vardos* (wagons) passed. Because of the Padroni's great wealth and proud heritage, few nobles cared to involve themselves in Gypsy matters (who were not, in any case, considered part of the feudal hierarchy), and thus the mistreatment of Padroni apprentices usually went uncontested and largely unnoticed.

In the thirteenth century, however, a discontented group of fifteen Maldonati apprentices, under the guidance of "Paolo," an old man who had learned the totality of Padroni wisdom, fled the caravan to the cold foothills of the Lombardian Alps. These were the first Benandanti, vagabonds related only by the virtue of their cauls. Once there, the Benandanti formed a small commune among the agricultural peasantry, where they could learn from Paolo in peace. But this peace did not last long.

With their departure, the losses suffered by some Maldonati bands (*kumpaniyi*) had been staggering. Even if they had not taken a financial loss, the Gypsies would not

have appreciated being outswindled by gorgios. Consequently, a number of Maldonati Padroni banded together to form hunting parties at every change of season (when their magic was at its height) to try to collect their "goods." To protect themselves from Gypsy magics, the Benandanti, just before vacating a town, would start rumors that *streghe* (witches) and *stregoni* (warlocks) were on the prowl. The peasants, seeing the strange and colorful Padroni hunting parties entering their peaceful hamlets, were often hostile to the Gypsies, and thereby won some time for the Benandanti to escape. From these early encounters between the "evil" *stregoni* and the strange but benevolent *benandanti*, superstitions about their cyclical battles became a part of the fabric of traditional European folklore.

Word of the Maldonati offshoot spread, and soon fledgling Benandanti were apprenticed by Benandanti, not Padroni, mentors. The power of the Maldonati family waned as the relative might of the Benandanti grew. Their small communes spread throughout areas of Italy where there was knowledge of the caul, and where the dangers of being seen as an organized pagan cult in an imperialistic Christian society were minimal. But the Benandanti could not evade the eyes of the proselytizers forever. In the early sixteenth century, a battle between the Benandanti and the dwindling Maldonati erupted and drew the attention of the Inquisition. The questioning began, resulting in a gradual devolution of the image of the Benandanti in the



minds of the peasantry from agricultural saviors and occult physicians to corrupt orgiasts and devil-worshippers. As a consequence, the Benandanti, like many other sects and belief groups of that day, were forced to go underground in order to continue to exist, but were fortunate in that the fury of the Inquisition had reached its peak before they were drawn into its tempest.

In many ways, today's Benandanti resemble their namesake — "vagabonds" or "good walkers" — even more than their ancestors. Theirs is a loose organization, based more around familial or collegial ties than any formal or professional relationship. Leading solitary lives, many Benandanti wander the globe and the Underworld in search of themselves — the secrets that their cauls contain and the meaning of life after death. While many of them meet to exchange knowledge at the Ymbrendæg Councils (also known as the *Raduni* — see below), many more have not even heard of them. There are forces, both Quick and Dead, that would keep the Benandanti — and the power that, if united, they represent — from hearing about these meetings, for their isolation is the key to their defeat.

### **Ymbrendæg Council**

Despite their lack of organization, many Benandanti try to meet during the Ember Weeks to exchange information and to socialize with others of their kind. These meetings are known among English-speaking Benandanti as the Ymbrendæg Councils, and elsewhere as the *Raduni*, or Gatherings. The Ember Weeks constitute the weeks:

- Starting on the first Sunday in Lent
- Starting on Whitsuntide (beginning with Pentecost)
- Including or immediately following September 14
- Including or immediately following December 13

Councils are usually informal affairs, sometimes reaching an attendance of twenty, but most often hovering around ten. Wherever Benandanti find it convenient to meet, they hang their traditional flag of gilded white ermine, symbolic of wisdom and purity.

### **Entrance Criteria**

The only way to become a Benandanti is to be born with a caul and be Unhooded by another Benandanti, traditionally called a *sapienza* (although many English-speaking Benandanti call this mentor-figure a *Wisdom*). A complicated ritual, the Unhooding is typically performed only on babies born with cauls who are relations of the *sapienze*. Centuries ago, the Padroni performed Unhoodings on adults, but this is rare nowadays. Once Unhooded, the fledgling Benandante (or *novizio*) becomes the responsibility of the *sapienza* until the age of twenty.

### **The Caul**

The one thing that separates the Benandanti from the rest of humanity is that we are Unhooded, and this allows us to see through the Shroud that obscures the mysteries of the afterlife, and sometimes even to enter the Underworld itself. Do not be confused by the difference between our cauls and the Cauls of the Dead. Symbolic of life itself, ours are pieces of vitality, of life essence, clinging to us even as we are born and begin to die. I believe that the Cauls of the Dead, on the other hand, are pieces of the Shroud that cling to the souls of fledgling ghosts. These Cauls, until removed, prevent these ghosts from seeing into the Underworld, inducing a dreamlike state similar to that which we experience during Ekstasis, as we meditate before passing through the Shroud.

— E.G., excerpt from the proceedings of the Autumnal Raduno, Nemi, Italy, 1995

### **Attitude**

The majority of the Benandanti are divided into two general schools of thought. The *Dannati* (Damnation Theorists) believe that wraiths are the evil spirits of the damned who must be destroyed both for their own sakes and for the sake of the living. The *Redentori* (Redeemers), a larger group, believe that wraiths are merely souls who do not understand that they are dead, and they maintain that the role of the Benandanti is to encourage them to move beyond the afterlife. There are other minor schools of thought with different views regarding wraiths, including the extremely controversial *Risorgeritori* (Resurrectionists), who believe that these souls should be recycled into the bodies of the profoundly retarded and the clinically insane. Each school proposes different methods for achieving the destruction, transcendence, or recycling of restless souls. To these ends, Benandanti study the Restless and the afterlife. Unlike the Arcanum, however, their study takes the form of oral tradition rather than formal schooling and professional research. Wisdom is passed from one Benandante to the next; there are no central libraries or research centers, and what funding exists is usually passed privately from *sapienza* to *novizio*.

### **Organization**

Because they are divided into different schools of thought, and because their population density in any given area is so low, the Benandanti suffer from lack of organiza-

tion. Few Benandanti know each other and even fewer attend *Raduni*. Notification of where *Raduni* will take place each year is typically passed by word of mouth, *sapienza* to *novizio* — the most formal relationship, it should be noted, that can be found among the Benandanti.

### Myth and Fact

Because Benandanti can see into and on occasion even enter the Underworld, they do not suffer from the many misconceptions that plague other organizations. However, the information that they do get wrong is usually terribly inaccurate, made worse by the vagaries of gossip spread during *Raduni* like the children's game "Telephone." Starting characters typically do not even know that Benandanti can enter the Underworld, much less that the ghosts they see wandering around in the Shadowlands have a society, a slave trade, and, in a sense, a "life."

### Resources

Because the Benandanti lack formal organization, they also lack shared resources. Thus, a character must depend primarily upon his own ability to find needed resources, and secondarily upon his *sapienza*'s ability, if his *sapienza* is willing to help.

### Ranking System

Since the Benandanti have little formal structure, they also do not have much of a formal ranking system. Those who have learned the most about the Restless or have best lived up to the ideals of their particular school of thought are held in highest regard by their peers.

### Superstitions

Myth and reality often share the same roots, but the flowers they bear can be very different. A good example of this is the number of superstitions concerning the Benandanti that have arisen in various parts of the world. These superstitions, often very similar, persist even today among the peasants in remote areas of Italy, Romania, and Turkey. If Benandanti characters end up in one of these locales and the populace discovers their heritage, Storytellers may want certain locals to react in accordance with the following superstitions. These are that the Benandanti:

- Meet in their sleep;
- Use fantastical transport — cats, hares, toads (the Inquisition began this rumor); some rumors claim that they can even shapeshift into these animals;
- Are the archenemies of the *stregoni*, evil sorcerers, whom they fight with fennel branches and who fight back with broomlike reeds;

- If victorious, bring abundant crops the following year; if not, bring famine;
- Can talk with the dead and therefore cannot be completely trusted;
- All have cauls, which the peasantry calls *cappucci* or "hoods" (singular: *cappuccio*);
- Can be killed by tearing or destroying their cauls.

### Ekstasis

In order to set foot in the Underworld, Benandanti must enter a sleeplike state known as Ekstasis. For details, see "Special Rituals" in Chapter 3, "Character Creation."

### A Benandanti's Greatest Weapon

At midsummer, our ancestors used to hang sprigs of fennel over the thresholds of doors to ward off evil spirits for the remainder of the year. According to long-standing tradition, fennel has some power over evil spirits; the Benandanti knew when they first created their mystical fennel swords centuries ago. Now their greatest weapon, the fennel sword represents the Benandanti's power over and integration with the spirit world. All Benandanti must be taught how to create these weapons, which are forged during Ekstasis and are mystically bound with the power of their cauls. Typically, the *sapienza* who Unhools a *novizio* teaches her this wisdom, but the Benandante must forge the weapon without her mentor's help. This is not an easy process. It requires stamina, persistence, and, most of all, courage, for the forging itself is completed in the hellish cold of a Nihil. Furthermore, it makes sense only to use fennel swords against the Restless; a Benandante may strike living creatures or things with her fennel sword, but she will probably break it, as the iron from which it is forged is technically flawed: the fennel stalks and leaves mixed into the ore weaken the iron in the physical realm, but strengthen it in the Underworld. — E.G.



## The Alternate Energy Group

Formed to solve the world's energy crisis, this group consists of some of the best scientific minds of the century. Meeting in Geneva every autumn, the group researches the viability of new potential energy sources. One of its splinter divisions is the Paranormal Research Wing (PRW), a number of radical scientists (mostly from Berkeley, Edinburgh, and Duke Universities) who are studying the industrial uses of psychic and ectoplasmic energies. While this wing has not yet been able to procure funding directly from the government, it has many other sources, including huge multinational conglomerates and more obscure societies that promote paranormal research. Current research involves, in part, discovering how best to convert ectoplasm into energy to be used by industry. As a side effect, this practice destroys the ghosts involved.

### Entrance Criteria

While there are no formal requirements for participation in the Group, all of its members are trained scientists with impressive research and publication credentials. Older scientists, already members of the PRW, hand-pick new members from a relatively small crop of promising young scientists, mostly from paranormal studies programs at the University of California-Berkeley, Duke University, and the University of Edinburgh in Scotland. These "apprentices," as they are considered, must be capable of grant writing and independent paranormal research, although they generally work under the wing of an older, more prominent scientist. If there is any "formal" entrance criterion, it is that members must be capable of keeping their research a secret — in fact, they must sign a non-disclosure agreement before becoming members — to ensure fairness to their patrons.

### Attitude

While more open-minded than other scientists in the Alternate Energy Group, members of the PRW are still scientists. They use the scientific method in all their research, and cultivate a certain degree of healthy skepticism in their findings.

### Organization

The three main research centers for the PRW are located in Berkeley, California; Durham, North Carolina; and Edinburgh, Scotland; although much research is conducted "in the field" (haunted houses, crossroads, and other places of desolation). The Board of Directors, consisting of five senior PRW members, and the Board of Ethics direct research efforts, although the PRW's major funding resources have a greater hand in determining the annual direction of research. Each research group within the PRW has a Director, and often has an advisor who claims to have a relevant form of paranormal ability (channelers or psychics, for instance). While these individuals are consulted, their claims are scrutinized for scientific accuracy, just as any other source of information would be.



### Myth and Fact

Most PRW scientists know very little about the Underworld. While some concede that consciousness may continue to exist beyond the grave, this is considered to be mere speculation. Some PRW scientists have seen Arcanos manifested just before ghosts slip into ECEs, but they do not know the extent or range of these powers, and some even suspect that they are hallucinations produced by high-frequency emissions just before the energy conversion process. Currently, most PRW scientists think that ghosts are simply high-frequency psychic resonances of the consciousnesses of those who have died.

Every research group involved in converting ectoplasmic energies has been issued an Ectoplasmic Converter Engine (or ECE—see Appendix for details) which is able to sense ghosts and convert them into a form of energy which the PRW has not yet learned to harness. Research on this energy has stalled while the Ethics Board decides whether studies done on non-material entities without their consent, regardless of whether or not they have been proven to exist, is ethical. However, the pressure from industrial groups who are funding the PRW is enormous and is expected to sway the Ethics Board's decision in favor of experimentation. In the meantime, a number of groups are secretly proceeding with their experiments.

### Resources

The PRW is fairly well-funded, although it is currently pouring most of its resources into producing costly ECEs for

fieldworkers. Thus, while they may borrow equipment from a PRW office, researchers must use their own resources to pay for travel and other expenses. Additionally, researchers have access to the extensive California State University libraries, as well as to Duke's and Edinburgh's. Mentors are readily available.

### Ranking System

Most new characters are PRW field scientists who gather data using ECEs and other equipment. If they want to continue to receive equipment, funding and information, they must abide by the decisions of the PRW's senior members.

In terms of the ranking system, the most senior members of the PRW generally have at least twenty-five to thirty years of experience and a list of publications longer than Rumplestiltskin's beard. Many of these members teach at the university level or work for large corporations interested in their findings. Junior to them are those scientists who direct research groups, conduct the higher-level research (many of them are physicists interested in high-energy state conversion), submit progress reports to their seniors, and present their findings at private conferences. Just below them are the new PRW members: they do the lab work, take the ECE into the field and wait for results, assist the directors, occasionally take on individual projects as needed, and correlate and interpret the data.

## The Orphic Circle

The venerable tradition of the Orphic Circle reaches beyond recorded history into the shadows of a more mythic time. Current members believe that its founder was an Egyptian vampire whose fear of the second death led him to descend into the Underworld to seek true immortality. From his belief in the mysteries of the Isis-Osiris religion sprang the Cult of the Orphic Circle, whose members even today practice rituals derived from many of Orphism's Mysteries.

The Orphic Circle still retains this time-honored tradition of the descent into the Underworld, after the legend of Orpheus who did the same. Today's 300 members uniformly share the desire to discover the true nature of death and immortality, and have come a long way toward doing so. Consisting of scholars, vatics, death mages, vampires, and even some wraiths, the Orphic Circle promotes research in the Underworld and, like a well-greased piece of Machiavellian machinery, involves itself deeply and secretly in the politics of the Restless.

Because some members of the Orphic Circle also hold memberships in other highly secret societies (many of its vampires, for instance, belong to the mysterious and dangerous Giovanni clan, while some of its mortals also have membership in the Arcanum, the Benandanti, or the College of Psychic Learning), every Orphic Circle member takes a mystically binding oath of secrecy.

Despite their common bonds, Orphics do not automatically know everything about the nature of their colleagues. Many an Orphic scholar has remained blissfully unaware that the unaging Acolyte he called his protégé was a necromantic vampire of the Giovanni clan or a Euthanatos mage in disguise. In fact, most mortals within the Circle remain unaware that there are vampires and mages in their midst; likewise, many mages are unaware of vampires, and vice versa. Such secrets are even more well-kept than that of Circle membership. When they aren't, members die.

What the Orphic Circle intends to do with its knowledge remains, for now, a matter of speculation among its members. Rumors have circulated for years that the Ebon Bench (see below) intends to drop the Shroud at the end of the millennium, releasing the spirits of the Dead into the lands of the living. The question of why the Bench would want to do so remains a mystery, although various theories have been put forth:

- The complete integration of the Underworld with the Sunlit Lands will mystically return the Earth to a primitive state in which death and life are one. In consequence, death would no longer be something to fear, but merely an interesting change of state. This view's opponents point out that the lifting of the Shroud will only integrate the Restless with the living; the issue of Transcendence and Oblivion would still not be broached.

- Dike (see below) travels within the Shroud between Earth, the Underworld, and into the unknown realms of

## The Orphic Oath of Secrecy

I, <name>, do hereby avow that my life is forfeit should I ever, by commission or by omission, reveal the existence of, the knowledge considered secret by, or the names of the membership of the Orphic Circle. Should I commit such grievous error, I pledge to correct what I may before my execution, under the guidance of the Ebon Bench. Under such circumstances, I do consider the Ebon Bench fully entitled to carry out my execution and, should it become necessary, any deserved punishment in the afterlife.

To make the Oath of Secrecy binding, the Ebon Bench performs a Major Binding on the candidate (see Chapter 3). The Binding itself (as opposed to the candidate's oath) stipulates that the candidate will inform the Ebon Bench of any breach of the aforementioned oath and will not attempt to escape or mitigate his own punishment in any way.

Transcendence and Oblivion (the latter is just speculation). By dispensing with the Shroud, the Bench cuts off Dike's mode of transport. Because the Judge is no longer capable of arriving at death, mortals no longer need to worry about the consequences of their actions.

- Secrecy is becoming hard to maintain. By lifting the Shroud, the Ebon Bench reveals the truth to everyone, beginning an era of knowledge among the living. The Bench's new role would enable them to consult with political leaders to promote mortal acceptance of their place in a universe larger than it once seemed.

- The least popular — and most worried — theorists think that the Ebon Bench may have sold out to a powerful Malfean who wants direct access to the lands of the living.

## The Dikeia and the Orgiophantes

Despite its name, the Orphic Circle is less unified than it sounds. Two factions are waging a well-mannered war of supremacy over the direction in which to take the Circle. The Dikeia believe that the Orphic Circle should return to its ancient traditions, which include more violent, orgiastic behavior and a prohibition against males within the priesthood that constitutes the Circle's ruling body. Opposing them are the Orgiophantes, who control the priesthood now and believe in continuing as is. Certain powerful wraiths in Stygia and the Shadowlands have secretly aligned themselves with each of the two factions, and it is whispered that the Dikeia have even won the support of some alien beings — but more than that, even among the more advanced but apolitical Dikeia, is not known.



Many of the practices of the modern Orphic Circle are based upon ancient Orphism and the cult of Dionysus. It is said that when the Greek hero Orpheus returned from the Underworld, he brought back with him precious scrolls which outlined the Mysteries of the afterlife and the precepts which mortals should follow in order to enjoy it. From these, the Orphic poems were written, memorized, and passed on from one generation to the next. Eventually, a cult grew up around the poems, some of the beliefs of which are:

- Upon death, we are judged on the basis of our deeds in life. If judged well, we enjoy feasts, sex, and other pleasures in the afterlife.
- The judge is known as Dike (pronounced dee-kay). Sometimes depicted as a fierce huntress, sometimes as a punitive she-demon (*poinai*), Dike can be identified by her huge, glossy black wings, and the short loin cloth and long boots she wears in the manner of ancient huntresses. She represents moral responsibility and the darker side of an otherwise very life-centered religion.
- Life is joy; if life is not enjoyed, neither shall death be enjoyed. Thus, black clothes shall not be worn at the altar of the gods, and impurities must be purged before all sacred events.
- Seek immortality in all things. Most blessed are those who create: actors, playwrights, poets, writers, artists, mothers and fathers.
- The cosmogonic egg is most sacred. Appearing dead like a stone to the eye, it is nevertheless filled with life-power, and, from it, the universe mystically originates. Used properly, the sacred egg can restore the dead to life. Also sacred are the phallus, particularly when represented in a *liknon* (an oblong basket of wickerwork filled with fruit or corn and chaff and covered with a cloth from which protrudes what looks like a phallus) and the mask of Eubouleus the god.
- The Orphic god is called Eubouleus (also known to many as Dionysus). Destined by his father Zeus and his mother Persephone to be Lord Over All, he is now Lord of the Underworld, god of the Nether World, and god of wine, pleasure, and immortality.

Most members of the Orphic Circle believe in Eubouleus only as a symbol of the power of the Underworld and its relation to immortality. Many of the beliefs of the ancient Orphic Circle have become highly abstracted in this age of restraint, this era of the scientific method. Additionally, not all members of the Circle are Westerners, and the cultural diversity of the group gives rise to a number of different traditions (e.g., among Asian members, sacred rites are performed in black clothing, as the traditional Western white clothing is, to them, reserved for mourning). Despite these differences, however, the Orphic Circle agrees on many things — for instance, they know that an entity called Dike exists somewhere between the Sunlit Lands and the Shadowlands and is capable of visiting both at all levels; it is said that Dike disappears altogether at times — although where the entity goes is a matter of great speculation.

### Entrance Criteria

Orphic Circle candidates are open-minded and conduct outstanding work within their specialties (research, politics, leadership, as well as standard fields of study), but are not famous or popular. This caveat is necessary because of the difficulty involved in maintaining a high level of secrecy if a member has a public persona.

Ten Circle members called Kerberos, reappointed every three years, serve as a watchdog committee responsible for recruiting and evaluating all potential members. Whenever a seat in the 300 is vacated, Kerberos conducts a search for a new member to fill that seat. If a potential member shows signs of producing unstable, uncertain or falsified results or of displaying information to outside parties, he is rejected. Kerberos can afford to be selective, as it literally chooses its members from a crop of thousands of highly talented potential inductees worldwide. Furthermore, once in, the candidate remains for life: if an inducted member wants to leave the Orphic Circle, she had better not try, or she may end up becoming the guinea pig in an Orphic mortality experiment.

### Attitude

Darker in character than the Arcanum, the Orphic Circle is nevertheless just as scholarly and knows a great deal about the mysteries of the Underworld. To gain such knowledge, however, sacrifices are required — often quite literally. Many members sacrifice the living and the dead to obtain information about mortality...and to satisfy their own curiosity. To them, the highest goal of existence is to rediscover the sacred Mysteries of the Underworld that Orpheus took from Hades. What many Circle members have forgotten — a misreading committed more frequently by the vampires and mages of the group — is that in other legends Orpheus descended to the Underworld not to gain knowledge, but to rescue his love, Eurydice. Indeed, it is revealing of the Circle's character that it bases its existence



RM



on the "fact" that their hero's sole purpose in descending was to gain knowledge.

### Organization

The Orphic Circle is so named not only because of its admiration of Orpheus, but also because its leadership consists of a small circle of nine elite scholars, politicians, and visionaries (three of each). Called the Ebon Bench after Eubouleus's Underworld throne, this group of priests and priestesses maintains tightfisted control over all 300 members of its organization. For the last 1100 years, the male-dominated group known as the Orgiophantes has been in the majority on the Bench, but just recently — within the past fifty years — the Dikeia have begun to turn the tables, winning 44% of the seating on the Bench.

In order to win Seatings, not only must priests and priestesses politick mercilessly to gain the vote of the membership, but they must also prove to the current priesthood that they have or can raise the resources to finance the many rituals they must perform throughout the year. Thus, the rich win Seats, while the poor do not. Voting takes place whenever a seat is vacated due to death (although, very occasionally, priests have been known to remain Seated even after death), permanent incapacitation, or retirement.

On the surface, most members of the Orphic Circle lead relatively ordinary lives. Many are wealthy, or have

some form of part-time employment which can accommodate their research and participation in Orphic events throughout the year. Such meetings are held at the beginning of every season — though fall and spring are given preference — as well as on special days throughout the rest of the year.

Most notably, the Ebon Bench sponsors the Great Festival every spring, during which all 300 members of the Circle gather in secret caves and on Orphic-owned property in the Greek Pindus Mountains. During the week of festivities, the ordinarily reserved membership completely lets go, enjoying the wild orgiastic rites of Eubouleus. The Ebon Bench allows the few wraiths formerly of the Orphic Circle to perform as *boukoloi*, or dancers, while the Orphics dance naked, drink wine, and make love. Unfortunately, stories about these huge parties getting violently out of hand on occasion are all too true. The legends of the Maenads running naked through the woods, castrating males, killing infants, and causing all other manner of bloodshed attest to the thoughtless brutality that may occur in the wake of such unfettered behavior.

Nevertheless, the Great Festival accomplishes two things: one, it ensures that the membership is happy with their choice of candidates for the priesthood, and, two, it attracts a mass of wraiths. Puppeteers Skinriding the mortals — and sometimes the vampires — enjoy the sheer physicality of the revelry. (This, incidentally, is why vio-

lence is often so much a part of the festivities; vampires often enter feeding frenzies when inexperienced wraiths control their bloodthirst. Sometimes, though much less frequently, Spectres get involved.) The Ebon Bench allows these Puppeteers into the festivities only after extracting from them a binding oath to submit to experimentation afterward, or as a favor to a powerful wraith. Sadly, many a wraith is so desperate for easy skin that he will agree to their demands, whatever the cost. Some speculate that these festivities are part of a grand ritual known only to the Ebon Bench, the cumulative energy of which will eventually tear away the Shroud itself.

### Myth and Fact

While the Orphic Circle knows more about the Underworld than any other ghosthunting organization, it is still capable of being misled. Unable to harm them directly, Hierarchy leaders have begun a campaign to misinform the Orphics, hoping to bring them to their own demise — for instance, in their attempt to destroy the Orphics from within, the Hierarchy is slowly leading the Outer Circle (see below) to believe that the Ebon Bench has been working in collusion with an evil Malfean.

### Resources

Only those who have the greatest personal resources rise to the Ebon Bench; the rest remain in the Outer Circle. Even so, Outer Circle members are either independently wealthy or have a good source of part-time income (Resources 1 or higher). The Orphic Circle provides members with few organization-owned resources, although if members need something, they may be able to convince other Orphics to lend it to them. The only communal Orphic resource is the 1020-acre property in the Pindus Mountains, as well as the system of caves beneath. In these caves, there is a vast library of occult material, some of it more than 2,500 years old. Characters wishing to use this library must petition the Ebon Bench itself, which will require some form of dark payment in return. Orphics are not allowed to see the other caves until they are much more experienced.

### Ranking System

The Orphic Circle has two divisions: the Inner and the Outer Circles. The Inner Circle consists solely of the priesthood (the Ebon Bench), while the Outer Circle consists of the Orphic Circle's membership. Members of the Outer Circle are all considered equal, although children are accepted into its ranks on rare occasions, and when this occurs, the child must defer to the Outer (or Inner) Circle member who sponsored him. Incidentally, in true Orphic fashion, children are allowed to attend *all* rituals and festivities held for Outer Circle members.

## Current Projects

The Orphic Circle is engaged in almost as many projects as there are members. Those of universal concern to the membership follow:

- The lower levels of the 1000-year-old Caves of Orpheus in Greece — caves in which the Circle's vast library and some ritual rooms are located — have begun to develop large cracks in the floor. While the Bench is trying to discover a magical ritual that will stabilize the rock, the Outer Circle is beginning a search for a new set of caves in the northern Italian Alps. Others are researching the appearance of Spectres in nearby cave systems.
- A number of Asian members have been dreaming of their own deaths. Each dream contains the same element: another Asian Orphic tosses a cosmogonic egg to the dreamer, who then drops it and dies. The scholar Canchyuan Ming Li recently made a small breakthrough in the methods used to discover how to resurrect the dead using a blessed cosmogonic egg, and he has been having these dreams every night.

- Dike was sighted walking amongst the mortals during the Great Festival last year. A panel of Orphics is trying to discover what her appearance might mean.

## The Center for Parapsychological Research

In the late 1800s, the societal phenomenon known as spiritualism (in the U.S.) and spiritism (in the U.K.) had reached its zenith. As a result of a staggering number of claims of apparitions, rappings, channelings, automatic writings, psychography, telepathy, and other phenomena, a group of interested scientific minds gathered to form the Society for Psychical Research (SPR) in 1882. It combined the talents of various generally academic individuals and societies already at work investigating these phenomena, including the famous William Crookes, Oliver Lodge, Andrew Lang, Arthur Conan Doyle, Arthur and Gerald Balfour, a number of Fellows of Trinity College (Cambridge), and the Cambridge University Ghost Society. Still, although nominally dedicated to scientific study of these phenomena, SPR became an avenue of spiritualist promotion while the Society's rationalistic ways gave the movement an air of scientific respectability.

By the early 1900s, many members of SPR recognized the need for organizations specifically designed to handle reports of the various types of phenomena. As a result, a number of groups, most of which inherited their view of spiritualism and psychic phenomena from SPR, splintered off to pursue research in different areas. Among these were the Center for Parapsychological Research (CPR) and the College of Psychic Learning (CPL).



Skeptical and highly scientific in nature, many members of this organization have gone on to join the faculties of Duke University and the University of Edinburgh — both of which have strong programs in parapsychology — as well as the Committee for Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal, based in Buffalo, New York. Today, the membership of CPR primarily consists of graduates of Duke's Parapsychology Laboratory and, strangely enough, M.I.T.'s High Energy Physics Lab, which has recently made some breakthroughs in high energy physics that seem to validate the existence of true psychic Kirlian coronas. Other members include scientifically- and spiritist-oriented Cambridge University graduates, as well as parapsychology amateurs. There is some African, Middle and Far Eastern interest in the group, but CPR is primarily a European and American phenomenon.

Today's CPR scientists specialize in two broad categories of parapsychology: extrasensory perception (e.g., telepathy and clairvoyance) and psychokinesis. Although not directly pursuing of wraiths, these scientists nevertheless have oblique contact with them through their research in these fields. A number of CPR researchers have found evidence, for instance, that certain living individuals are subconsciously capable of picking up the high-energy thoughts of the dead, a talent often called telepathy. Skeptics in the organization claim that the instruments used to detect the high energy auras passing from the dead to the living are actually detecting energy auras passing among living minds. Some scientists in the Clairvoyant Division are investigating sensitives' ability to channel the messages of the dead, particularly messages involving predictions of the future and divinations. Still others are looking into the phenomenon of psychokinesis as related to spiritualism — that is, whether or not spirits are capable of moving or altering matter with or without the assistance of a channeler. Thus far, these scientists have met with sardonic skepticism from scientific colleagues outside their areas of specialty. At times it seems that the only ones who believe their claims are the readers of *The National Enquirer*.

### Entrance Criteria

Membership in CPR is open to everyone with a payment of the \$50 annual membership fee. For the fee, members receive a discount on their registration for the annual CPR Conference (held in North and South America and Europe) and a subscription to the monthly publication *The Journal of Parapsychological Studies*, published by CPR. CPR also sponsors a group insurance plan, publication award competitions, and a job information service (which offers only a short list).

### Attitude

The Center is much more scientific and skeptical in nature than its sibling, CPL. It is ideal for those who are

truly interested in discovering, through use of the scientific method, whether or not the paranormal really exists.

## Organization

Phyllis Benchkin directs the efforts of her own office, the Office of Research Programs, the Office of Extrasensory Perceptions Research, the Office of Psychokinetic Research, and the Editorial Staff. Each of these offices consists of approximately two to three people, as CPR is not a large organization. However, it is extremely organized, and thus has provisions for the creation of other offices (such as Convention Staff, Member and Customer Services, and Center for Information Services) as necessary. All offices are home-based affairs located near the main campus of Duke University in Raleigh, North Carolina.

## Myth and Fact

CPR scientists are ill-informed about the Underworld. They generally (and usually incorrectly) attribute the psychic world to ghosts, although they correctly believe that there is what they call a "Veil" separating the world of the dead from that of the living. Typically, their projects focus on specific hauntings and the psychic evidence they can find there, rather than on the general notion of an "Underworld," its geography, and its inhabitants.

## Resources

CPR resources are extremely limited. The main office, located in Phyllis Benchkin's house, has a computer that can link into library databases around the world through Duke's database. Members may use the computer with Benchkin's permission. Dues pay for the \$3,500 budget allocated to special CPR projects. Benchkin and a few others pay other expenses out of their own pockets.

## Ranking System

There is no formal ranking system among CPR members, other than the minimum necessary for the 70-member organization to run smoothly. However, these formalities, such as they are, have created an "inner circle" of core CPR members, primarily consisting of scientists, researchers, and academic administrators who have a scientific background. Most of these hold Ph.D.s or M.D.s, although a rare few, including the Director of Special Projects, have theological degrees.

## Current Projects

The Division of Special Projects has a small budget, from which it allocates funds to certain projects of universal interest to CPR membership. Each project is named, numbered, and followed up on by a Budget Officer. Those projects relating to wraiths are described below:

- "The Dublin Channeler": Orphics are investigating reports that the noted Irish channeler Dermot Farley is experiencing premonitions concerning plans for a British secret mission against the IRA, which somehow involves

drugs, Stonehenge, the Black Forest, and a Celtic brooch covered in ectoplasm.

- "Psychokinetic Studies, the Afterlife, and Drug Abuse": Some members of the Office of Psychokinetic Research are conducting a study on whether or not drug abusers are more likely to develop psychokinetic powers through ghostly intercession. Special care is being taken to determine which drugs, if any, produce this effect. Similar unfunded projects are also underway involving the senile, the retarded, the clinically insane, and very young children.

- "Healing: the Spirit and the Mind": Another project for the OPR, these researchers are looking into the possibility of spiritual healing — that is, healing energies conducted from the dead into the living via an intermediary. There have been some reports of such healings in Ireland, Scotland and Colombia (South America), as well as in China and Korea. In every instance, the intermediary has been the seventh son of a seventh son.

## College of Psychic Learning

An offshoot of the Society for Psychical Research, the College of Psychic Learning dedicates itself to instructing individuals on how to use the psychic abilities with which they are naturally endowed. While some of the teachings at the College are pure charlatanism, others contain a grain of truth. The subjects range from out-of-body experiences and altered states of consciousness to dowsing and the Kirlian effect. Women in their late thirties and early forties comprise the majority of the student body. Most of the teachers are also female.

Although the College is technically a splinter group of the Society for Psychical Research, SPR wants nothing to do with this organization. Among the more scientifically minded, the College has a reputation for fakery and flakiness and is across the board incorrectly associated with New Age beliefs. While some of its instructors are New Agers, many of them act as freeform agents, who believe themselves to be mystically connected with the spirit world from which they derive their powers. Nonetheless, skeptics find it difficult to argue against the success these psychics have met in police and other search situations. Located in Alabama, the College has responded to many a local sheriff's request for help in finding criminal sites, missing persons and bodies. In fact, because of this success, the College has been able to coordinate a limited number of police-sponsored scholarships and work-study opportunities.

## Entrance Criteria

For students, academic credentials matter less in admissions decisions than do personal essays, recommendations, and prior experience in any of the fields of psychic study listed below. Competition for admission is fairly low, as CPL is not a popular (or typical) school, and

enrollment hovers around 50 students at any one time; on the other hand, competition for CPL's extremely limited number of scholarships, grants, and work-study opportunities is fierce. Interdisciplinary study is encouraged.

In order to work at CPL, faculty must have an established reputation in their field of study, either as a practitioner and/or as a teacher. Research is less important to hiring committees, and proof of ethical intention is required. Hiring committees tend to avoid applicants who have had a history of conflict or who like to see themselves as society's gadflies, as this attitude promotes bad relations with the College's neighbors, with whom the College is already on tenuous ground.

### Attitude

Most of the students and faculty at CPL are serious, dedicated, well-meaning, and ethical. The existence of a department devoted entirely to ethical issues demonstrates the College's continued interest in maintaining a high degree of respectability with its neighbors. Nonetheless, most faculty at CPL still receive a great deal of harassment. As a result, the faculty and students of the College have isolated themselves within their own little community. This, unfortunately, only serves to reinforce outsiders' negative opinions.

### Organization

A very small college in comparison with others in the United States, the College of Psychic Learning nevertheless operates in a manner similar to most private universities. It has a president, a board of directors, and an administration, as well as enrollment periods, tuition, and graduation fees. Most interesting, however, are its departments. They include:

- **The Department of Extraphysical Experiences:** Practices astral and dream travel and studies their history and theory.
- **The Department of Psychokinesis:** Practices self-powered psychokinesis and spiritist psychokinesis, also studying its theory and history. Also covers acupuncture and psychokinetic healing via aforementioned sources.
- **The Telepathy Department:** Studies prior telepathic research and practices transmission and reception. Also studies theories relating to intervivum telepathy (telepathy between living mortals) and postmortem telepathy (transmission from the dead to the living).
- **The Department of Clairvoyance and Dowsing:** Practices divination, geomancy, and dowsing using divining rods. Studies the role of channeling and other forms of contact with the dead, extraterrestrials, and beings from higher planes.
- **The Department of Aural and Kirlian Study:** Practices detection and reading of auras using the body's senses and those of machines (such as cameras and VCRs).



Also practices detection of the restless dead, extraterrestrials, and higher-energy beings using coronal energy tracing.

#### • The Department of Alternative Consciousnesses:

Studies the effect of altered states of consciousness on the perception of nonphysical phenomena. Has a special state license permitting governed use of certain drugs for experimental purposes. Also studies religious trance, hypnosis, dreams, mythology, and art. Has an exchange program with the Menninger Dream Laboratory in Brooklyn, New York.

• The Feng Shui Study Group: Practices and studies *feng shui* in depth. Students often double-major in this group.

• The Department of Psychical Ethics: Examines the ethics of using psychic abilities in a largely non-psychic world. Suggests and updates ethical guidelines for College use.

The College itself is located in a large converted mansion near Moundville, Alabama (pop. 1310), far from the psychic distractions of the city. Its grounds, which cover some 180 acres, are sleepy and peaceful, but somewhat gloomy, like a Victorian garden.

### Myth and Fact

Most of what is taught at CPL is garbage, but every once in a while, a student or faculty member wades through enough of it to discover a small grain of truth. Thus, for instance, while some faculty know that ghosts have a large range of magical powers, many of them believe that all ghosts have psychic abilities (it is generally acknowledged that ghosts exist). Moreover, most faculty have no conception of a real after "life" with societies, customs, and taboos. Rather, many faculty believe that ghosts are just the psychic echoes of once-living minds.

### Resources

The "founder" of CPL was a wealthy eccentric who willed his mansion and large collection of occult artifacts to CPL, then a struggling group of five scientists. Since then, CPL has attracted the attention of some police inspectors and private investigators, who use them for detective work. Money gained from these ventures, as well as from fundraising campaigns among the rich, has enabled CPL to stay afloat. Among other things, characters can expect to have access to one of five computers connected to a number of library databases.

### Ranking System

Similar to most colleges, CPL's hierarchy extends down from top-level administration officials to full professors to part-time lecturers to students. Those with the most teaching or field experience are most highly regarded. Because CPL considers itself to be a hands-on college with an emphasis on individual learning, it is not meticulous scholarly research, but rather teaching and field experience, that is more often rewarded.

### Current Projects

Most faculty members are involved in some project or other:

- "Kirlian Photography in Possessed Machinery: A Psychographic Crossover": Kirlian photography captures on film the psychic-energy image of an object or a being. A few faculty members are studying the effects of passing such film through machinery known to be possessed by wraiths. A number of experiments have revealed writings on the film which, when decoded, yielded prophecies that later came to pass.

- "Erecting the Dam: How to Prevent the Undesired Dreamtrips of Wraiths": A study of possible barriers to a wraith's entrance into sensitives' dreams.

- "Telepathic Reverberations in Haunts and Other Gloomy Places": A project engaging researchers in telepathic rapport with the ghosts residing in certain locales.

## The Power Seekers



Like a complex character, the organizations described below seek power for as many reasons as they have members. In **Wraith** terms, power seekers are those who contact the Restless or visit the Underworld in order to gain the ability to wield coercive force, permissive authority, or influence. They have an uncanny ability to discover precisely what in the Underworld will achieve these things for them and to coerce or persuade the Restless into handing them over. Often very talented in deception, they can — but do not always — trick both the living and the dead into performing their tasks. And while they do not reject information about the Underworld when it comes their way, the path they follow is quite different from that of the knowledge seekers.

### The Sons of Tertullian

Among the most determined of the hunters are the Sons of Tertullian, who use Tertullian's credo as a launching point for the eradication of the "godless" Dead and anyone who stands out in their minds as being associated with them. They distinguish between the types of ghosts they destroy only insofar as such distinctions help them gauge the threats they face; wraiths are no different than Spectres to the Sons. During exorcisms, they torture the possessed, a practice which, even if successful, often kills its beneficiaries. It is speculated among the psychics, channelers, and Gypsies who are their primary mortal targets that the Sons of Tertullian are themselves possessed of subtle and exceedingly evil spirits who drive them to commit these acts, although this charge has never been proven.



### Entrance Criteria

Above all, a character must distinguish himself as a devout Christian to gain entrance (the Sons, being generally wary of other beliefs, do not admit any but worshippers of their version of the "one true God"). The character must also be courageous, scholarly, physically fit, loyal, and fanatical in his beliefs concerning the Sons (in game terms, he must have True Faith). Good preludes for Tertullian hunters usually involve the character's final proof that he is a fit candidate for initiation.

### Attitude

The Sons of Tertullian are well-intentioned fanatics; if they suspect a person of being possessed, they will resort to anything that is in their power, including physical and psychological torture, to "have mercy on her soul." To get to this point, Tertullian initiates study hardening techniques, which help them to suppress feelings of compassion that may arise in such crisis situations.

### Organization

A venerable hunting organization, the Sons of Tertullian have a few secret monasteries spread throughout the world. A group of Elder Tertullians collectively called the Host directs them and often backs high-ranking individuals wishing to take leadership roles at a given monastery.

While this practice leads to bitter rivalries, it also builds valuable allegiances between monasteries. The ultimate head of the Sons of Tertullian, called the Host of Hosts, remains an enigma, a cloaked entity who will see none but the oldest, most experienced, and highest-ranking Elders.

### Myth and Fact

While Tertullians are remarkably well-informed about exorcism techniques, their knowledge of the exorcised is extremely superficial. They believe that ghosts are minions of Satan who can interpret and exercise his will as they see fit. Most Tertullians do not know that an Underworld "society" exists, and rarely do they consider that the Underworld may have its own geography. From the Sect of St. James, they have heard that mortals can walk the Underworld, although most Tertullians find this heretical and hard to believe.

### Resources

Tertullians are generally not wealthy and thus neither are their monasteries. While monastery-owned cars and advanced ghosthunting equipment are beyond the means of most monasteries, players can expect to have easy access to a decent occult library and common ceremonial materials. Lower-level mentors are usually also available, although characters must pay points for these.

## Ranking System

Full Sons are divided into seven Ranks, ostensibly awarded according to holy ability, possessions terminated, demons destroyed, and knowledge discovered, although in practice Ranks are often awarded on a political basis. Every Tertullian can perform limited exorcisms based on his Faith rating; with particularly powerful spirits, however, higher-ranking Sons come into play.

Each Rank has a title and a function associated with it, although Sons perform duties as necessary:

- **First Rank:** Scout, the Holy Army of the Blessed Archangel Gabriel. Function: Fields reports of possessions, finds trails of ghosts for Second, Third, and Fourth-Rank Sons.

- **Second Rank:** Diviner or Trapper, the Holy Army of the Blessed Archangel Gabriel. Function: Divines evil spirits in persons, but more frequently sets traps for "demons," prepares equipment (e.g. holy water).

- **Third Rank:** Special Operations, Tertullian's Eye. Function: Lures ghosts in for the kill, teaches Waiting Son initiates.

- **Fourth Rank:** Avenger, the Holy Army of the Blessed Archangel Gabriel. Function: Destroys evil spirits, teaches Full Son initiates.

- **Fifth Rank:** Exorcist, Tertullian's Right Hand. Function: Rids "victims" of powerful evil spirits.

- **Sixth Rank:** Scholar, The Mind of Justinian. Function: Researches the Underworld, develops theories, creates artifacts which are then dispersed to lower-ranking Tertullians.

- **Seventh Rank:** Preceptor, The Spirit of Gabriel. Function: Creates Tertullian policy, solves high-level disputes, attends meetings with the Host of Hosts, performs other secret duties.

Note that Fifth Rank and beyond is rare, as these require mastery of the art of High Exorcism, an ability that most humans simply do not have.

Waiting Sons—that is, Sons who have been initiated, but have not accrued enough experience (generally twelve years) or respect to become Full Sons—are divided into two ranks: Apostles of Gabriel and the Thrice-Blessed Mendicants. The first group tends to focus its studies on warriorship—dealing with wraiths one-on-one, for instance—while the second group focuses on scholarship and the more contemplative aspects of their belief system. Players usually begin in one of these categories.

## Sects

Because the Sons' monasteries are geographically divided, many different beliefs concerning the correct interpretation and practice of Justinian's vision have developed. Within the Sons, there are five known sects: the Sect of Saint James, the Sect of Mary, the Disciples of Lazarus, Solomon's Sons, and the Sickle and Crown. Each

of these follows the basic precepts of the Sons of Tertullian, while placing emphasis on one or another aspect of its mission. The Sect of Mary, for instance, represents the female counterpart to St. James, a troop of seventy-seven anointed 'sisters' prepared to commit suicide to gain the kingdom of the Lord. The Disciples of Lazarus follow the belief that the possessed, if killed, must be somehow resurrected, as they were deprived by demons of a life given to them by God. Solomon's Sons emphasize the acquisition of knowledge, while the Sickle and Crown believes that the desire to acquire knowledge before a hunt is a spiritual crutch that reveals the hunter's lack of faith—only plunging headfirst into a fight ultimately proves one's faith.

## The Seven Sisters

In the nineteenth century, public belief in ghosts and the occult from Romantic fancy to, quite literally, international fad. By the latter third of the century, Victorians so frequently reported spirits haunting occupied houses, turning tables, lifting guitars, playing accordions, possessing mediums, spelling out answers to questions, and generally showing off that societies of professional men formed to investigate the phenomena. Both women and men could earn a healthy living by becoming mediums, as long as their clients did not expose them as frauds. Still, honest mediums did exist. If they were ever "exposed," it was either because someone had a grudge against them or because their clients' skepticism dampened the magic they were indeed performing.

Among the true mediums were the Seven Sisters. Orphaned during the birth of the youngest triplets, the Seven Sisters shortly thereafter found that they could hear the sad voice of their dead mother. The oldest sister, Gwyn Jones, encouraged her younger siblings to contact their mother. Little by little, the sisters learned how to speak with her, then with other ghosts.

After a series of tragedies in which the triplets fell into a coma, their uncle committed suicide, and their aunt abandoned the sisters, Gwyn moved her younger sisters to Philadelphia, where they began careers as mediums. They began to take customers in their small apartment, and their clientele gradually grew. In 1848, when the Foxes hit it big, the sisters' business went international, attracting the attention of politicians and nobility abroad.

The sisters claimed to, and indeed were able to, speak with the inhabitants of the Underworld. They were fascinated with the power and notoriety they had gained in only a few years. With their abilities, they were able to influence foreign policy, political intrigue—the welfare of entire countries. Their predictions usually came true, and with that their respectability and popularity among high society burgeoned. Eventually, they began to use their talents not just as a means to make money, but also to increase their own power as consultants to kings.

Gwyn, with the claim to be considering the well-being of her younger sisters, instituted The Seven Sisters in 1911 — a society dedicated to improving the reputation of mediumship in political circles. Membership dues were to go to the triplets, who had since been moved to an expensive hospital in New York. What Gwyn did not tell society members was that these funds were actually distributed among all the sisters. When the last of the sisters died in 1920 at the age of 92, her estate was calculated to be worth approximately two million dollars.

The Seven Sisters still exists, much wealthier with the demise of its founders, although certainly not rich. Most of its funds nowadays come from wealthy politicians who support the Sisters' efforts (and can use their donations as tax write-offs). Its purpose has not changed, nor has the attitude of its members regarding the general appeal of political power. The Sisters is a private organization comprised primarily of high-society women with a tremendous amount of influence over the politicians and other officials who consult them. Most of these women truly are channelers who open themselves up to the Puppetry Arcanos. The society strongly discourages fraud, as it reflects poorly upon the Sisters as a whole, directly contradicting their stated purpose. However, manipulating events so that they turn out in favor of both the channeler and the client is not frowned upon. Moreover, trying to trick or manipulate the Restless is also discouraged, as they can very easily embarrass channelers during their sessions.

### **Entrance Criteria**

Applicants must pass a series of channeling tests judged by a panel of current members. These tests include sections on Prediction (see "Numina," Chapter 5), Client Awareness, Social Understanding, and Presentation Skills. If an applicant fails to produce specific and accurate predictions, does not seem tuned in to a client's needs, is naïve about how politics or government works, or has extremely poor presentation skills, she may be refused membership. The most heavily weighted test is Prediction, as the other skills can be learned.

Once she has passed the tests and paid her membership fee, the applicant undergoes a probationary period in which an older member tutors her. Classes are held once a week, during which new members meet to discuss their new skills and to hold practice seances and individual client sessions. After six months, if the new member seems to be working out, her tutor invites her to a formal black-tie dinner or political ball where she meets prospective clients. Before she arrives, she is well rehearsed in what to say, who to talk to, how to act, and how to dress.

If her probationary period goes well, the Seven Sisters' Executive Council assigns a locale or a political group for the new member to work on. While most of the major political factions in United Nations countries have a Sister

assigned to them, only a few politicians take the Sisters seriously.

### **Attitude**

To the Executive Council, political power is the be-all and end-all of their mystical existences. It can get them whatever they want, and since, unlike their clients, they are not in the limelight, they do not have to risk taking falls. However, because channeling is so often associated with fraudulence, they have taken measures to ensure that they are not discredited. They encourage their membership to practice honesty, patience, understanding, and discretion. They collect letters of reference from famous or respectable clients and encourage word-of-mouth advertisement. They are strict about whom they let into the Seven Sisters, conducting thorough background checks on all candidates. Finally, they keep tabs on their membership by requiring annual interviews with the Executive Council.

### **Organization**

The Seven Sisters are based in Washington, D. C., where they meet in the basement of a downtown library and maintain a small but tidy office. A number of smaller "branch offices" (running out of Sisters' homes) also exist in San Diego, London, Paris, Moscow, and Berlin. Members are assigned to the office nearest their home locale, although they typically only have to travel there for their annual interview.

The Executive Council at the home office handles most administrative duties relating to assignments and new membership. They send these data to the main office in Washington, which stores the information on its computer database. When the computer tags a member as having been a Sister for seven years, she is given the option of becoming a Tutor and receiving a commission of thirty percent of their students' first-year earnings.

### **Myth and Fact**

Because, like many channelers, they believe that wraiths are the souls of humans who want to help the living, most of what wraiths reveal is considered fact. Thus, for instance, those Sisters who have heard of the Hierarchy believe that Spectres run it (they do know the difference between wraiths and Spectres), as this is what they have been told.

### **Resources**

The Seven Sisters' resources are limited. Their Washington office has a computer for word-processing and data entry, as well as some statistics software. Relying primarily on client donations and membership dues, the Council manages to pay the Washington office's rent, while a library in downtown Washington allows the Sisters to meet in its basement on designated nights. Additional gifts from

clients are distributed among the offices to purchase inexpensive supplies and equipment.

## Ranking System

When members have been in the Seven Sisters for ten years or more, they are eligible to take a seat on the Executive Council, a prestigious though unpaid position in the organization. When a Sister has been a member of the Executive Council for ten years, she is eligible to become the Political Liaison, an office held in high esteem among both Sisters and informed clients (who know them only as "Liaison Officers"). Political Liaisons are often invited to counsel clients on the most secret of issues... and they receive compensatory gifts from their clients in order to ensure their silence. They also maintain contact with more powerful ghosts, who often like to make deals with their clientele through these Liaisons.

## Current Projects

While the Sisters do not embark on "projects" per se, they do have "assignments." Most remain secret at the client's request.

- A West German bureaucrat has promised to erect a monument in memory of a powerful ghost in exchange for two years' worth of predictions on the health of certain industry leaders. So far, he has made a tidy sum in investments... too tidy.

- Opening herself up as a Consort, a Sister in Moscow was invaded by a malevolent ghost. The ghost, who evidently harbored some resentment against the client, a former Politburo member, caused the Sister to kill him. She now faces permanent incarceration unless she can prove to non-believers that she was forced to kill.

- A Circle of Hierarchy wraiths opposed to the intervention of the Sisters in Underworld affairs recently appeared at a Foreign Affairs ball in Washington, evoking various unpleasant effects (pus in the punch bowl, nests of adders under dancers' feet, steaming slime in the toilets, etc.) that ruined the evening. The hosts called it a prank and placed the blame on the attending Seven Sisters Liaison Officer, who must now ensure that no further demonstrations of this sort occur.

## Daughters of Creusa

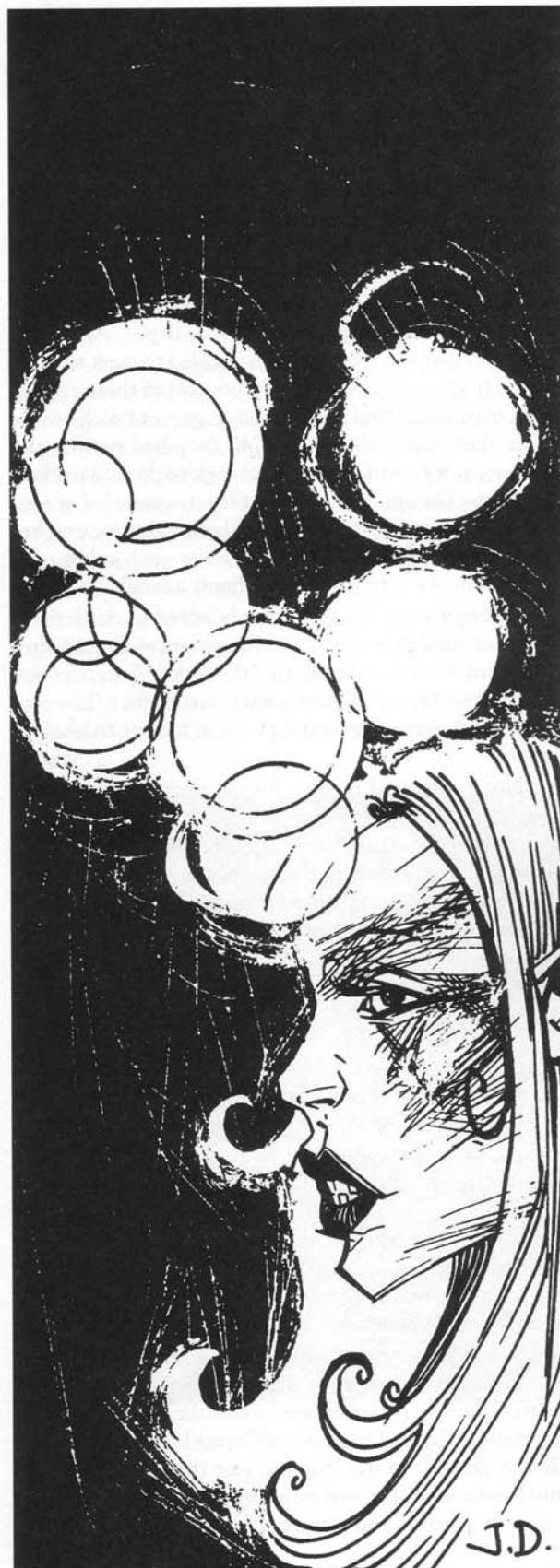
*With these words, though I wept and had so much to say  
To her, she left me, fading out into thin air.*

*Three times I tried to put my arms around her neck, and three  
times*

*The phantom slipped my hands, my vain embrace: it was like  
Grasping a wisp of wind or the wings of a fleeting dream.*

— *The Aeneid* by Virgil, translated by C. Day Lewis

While many organizations intent on obtaining power from the Underworld seek it actively, The Daughters of Creusa began in response to the frightening practices of the



Sons of Tertullian. As psychics, they are one of the Tertullians' primary targets — viewed, if fortunate, as afflicted victims of possession, and if unfortunate, as active and willing agents of Satan. The Daughters use power as a tool with which to defend themselves against the purging activities of the Sons.

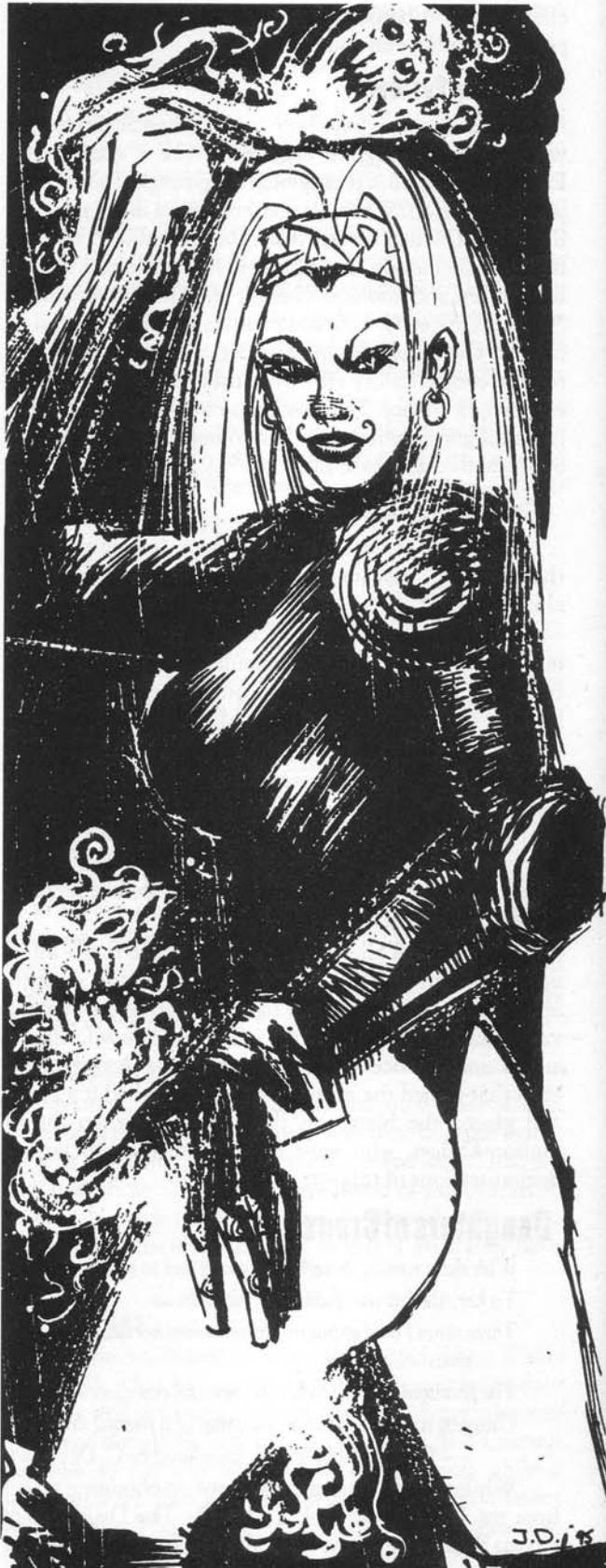
The movement began in Greece in 1740, after a search party found the mutilated bodies of three missing Greek women dumped in a stream in the middle of the woods. For the past ten years, women had been kidnapped and later found dead, their only common link being their roles as *sophistes*, or channelers, for nearby villages. After this incident, however, local *sophistes* decided to meet secretly to search for and punish the perpetrators of these crimes. Later, they would find it preferable to prevent such crimes before they occurred, but in 1740 they had neither the influence nor the information network to do so. Membership in the Daughters meant that there were a lot of eyes looking out for you, much like neighborhood crime watches today. The Daughters, who once knew each other only superficially, became a sorority, almost a family.

Belonging to a tradition that honored its dead, these women named themselves the Daughters of Creusa after the wife of Aeneas. Killed during the sack of Troy, Creusa reappears to Aeneas in ghost form to warn him to leave for Hesperia. Aeneas tries to embrace her, but she fades away forever.

Not as resigned to their fate as their namesake, the Daughters saw themselves as avengers of those who died undeservedly, mutilated and unburied. They met secretly in the woods at night to exchange information and to learn new "spells," which to them were methods of speaking with the dead, obtaining their help, and prophesying the future accurately. For many years, the mystery of who had committed the decade of murders remained unsolved, the trail growing ever colder. But, like Furies, the Daughters vowed for their sisters' sakes never to give up. By the late 1700s, they had gathered a great deal of information from the dead and the living about possible culprits.

Finally, in 1802, they discovered who was behind the continuing persecution. The Sons of Tertullian became their nemesis, and they dedicated themselves to eradicating this group wherever they could. Nevertheless, the Daughters stood little chance of completely annihilating those who had caused them so much suffering, for the Sons had much greater influence, more wealth, more information, and more members.

The Sons, in turn, only infrequently bothered the Daughters, but when they did, blood was spilled. Their inattentiveness, however, was to cost them some lives. By the mid-1800s, the Daughters of Creusa had spread beyond Greece north into the Balkans, east through Persia, and into Russia, as well as west into Europe, where the Sons had begun to question and torture. This secret movement was



most popular among societies of wise women who traditionally honored the dead and practiced ancestor-worship. Small gatherings of women would secretly meet to exchange information or to summon the spirits of the Restless to perform mutually agreeable work. Whether that meant they had to meet at the town well where the men assumed they were simply exchanging gossip, or they had to slip out into the woods at night under the rubric of collecting herbs for a healing, made no difference to them; they wanted justice. And justice they received, for many a Son was captured and questioned—and some of his own instruments of torture used against him—and then set free to warn his comrades. Depending on the crimes to which they confessed, others were not so lucky.

Today's Daughters of Creusa have become an information network with an enforcement arm that protects potential victims and an assistance network designed to help those, both living and dead, who are in need. To get to this point, the Daughters have had to maintain a unified vision and accept the fact that power, and power alone, will help them to achieve their goals. To them, power means wealth, social influence, legal immunity, and education. In addition to being channelers, many Daughters are also lawyers, stockbrokers, businesswomen, librarians, collectors, or other professionals trading in power, information, and money. Because of this single-minded focus on the acquisition of power, the Daughters can be ruthless adversaries, but their intent is nevertheless good: they are the avengers of the innocent and their protectors against crimes that police and other legal authorities cannot be expected to solve.

### Entrance Criteria

As with many secret societies, the Daughters of Creusa accept new members only if current members sponsor them. Because psychic and leadership abilities are so necessary, the Daughters have established an elaborate method of determining how well candidates will stand up to the pressures of their job. By helping ghostly Oracles (see "Fatalism" in *Wraith: The Oblivion*) guard their Fetters, the Daughters elicit their cooperation in reading the fates and the histories of candidates. Once a candidate is established to be trustworthy and capable, she is assigned to protect the Fetters of the Oracle that vouched for her. Oracles can revoke their reading at any time.

The Daughters of Creusa are a female-only society. This is primarily because no current Daughter has ever sponsored a male candidate; such an event, however, is not beyond the realm of possibility, particularly if the candidate can offer the Daughters something beyond what typical candidates can (e.g., he works in the CIA or FBI, or he owns a large collection of documents pertaining to splinter groups of the Inquisition).

### Attitude

The Daughters are not "evil"; they simply want a justice that only they can obtain for themselves. Thus, acquisition of power and information is their *modus operandi*. They are often very focused and can be ruthless if someone or something stands in the way of their quest for justice. On the other hand, they frequently risk their lives to avenge victims of persecution and they protect whoever they can from it.

At heart, they are merciful, typically preferring to release a Son of Tertullian after a stern (and sometimes painful) warning rather than killing him. If he has been involved in a Daughter's death, but is not directly responsible, they will mark him for haunting; that is, they set a mark upon him (see below) that tells the wraiths on their "payroll" to haunt him for a set period of time. In return for the wraiths' nights of unceasing keening and other frightening activities, the Daughters will help these wraiths in whatever way they wish (as long as the Daughters do not consider it evil). Those Tertullians who are directly responsible for the deaths of a Daughter or an innocent wraith are sentenced to death at the hands of the victim (if possible; otherwise a Daughter will perform the execution) after reliving the crime through the eyes of the victim for a week. In administering the appropriate punishment, the Daughters work closely with a number of Sandmen who owe them favors.

### The Creusan Mark

The Daughters have a sense of humor as well as a sense of justice. A private joke between the Daughters and the Restless, the Creusan Mark in the Underworld appears as a "Kick Me" sign the size of a bumper sticker on the behinds of the Marked. It stays with the Marked despite changes of clothes or other attempts to cover—so to speak—one's ass.

The only way for the Marked to rid themselves of their nether humiliation is to immerse the afflicted body part in Tertullian's holy font—an act to which many are strangely adverse.

While the Marked may try to Ward or Forbid wraiths from bothering them, the wraiths usually find the reward promised by the Daughters too tantalizing to relinquish. Besides, bugging these fanatics is too much fun to miss....

## Organization

Like wraiths, the Daughters organize themselves in Circles. They choose a *sophistes*, or wise woman, who leads each Circle based upon her experience or leadership ability. Her authority is limited to resolving disputes, setting directions for investigations, and getting members out of legal trouble. Daughters are under no formal obligation to follow her lead if she proves incapable.

Each Circle has a secret meeting place called a Refuge, which might be at a local chess club, in a private office, on the steps of a federal monument, or in a haunted garden. Above all, it must not be conspicuous, for the Tertullians are always watching. Circles also maintain a second Refuge more secret than the first, places for renegade Daughters to hide and members to fall back on if their first Refuge is discovered.

### • The Arm of Law

The Daughters of Creusa have found it necessary to create "police" Circles dedicated to hunting down and capturing Tertullian criminals and other infringers. Typically, four or five Circles meet in a Creusan Ring to create these Enforcer Circles of ten to twelve Daughters. Members suited to such activities (i.e., those who are in shape and know some martial arts) volunteer for this position. If there is not a sufficient number of suitable volunteers, members of the originating Circles are trained and rotate duties. The only Circles with rights to the Enforcer Circle are those who sponsor it; if an outside Circle needs its services, it must wait until the Enforcer Circle has a spare moment.

When a Circle reports a crime to their Enforcer Circle, the Enforcers prioritize it based upon the number of lives at stake. They may have to travel hundreds of miles to investigate, as the territories they patrol cover the geographical range of their Creusan Ring, usually quite large (e.g., the Enforcer Circle "The Howling Coyotes" must cover the entire southwestern United States). Obviously, the traveling required of Enforcers can run them ragged in only a few months; taking time off is encouraged.

### • The Arm of Mercy

Another Circle necessary to a well-organized Creusan Ring is the Mercy Circle, a group of women dedicated to helping out hunted Daughters and wraiths in need of aid. Like an underground railroad, they offer whatever help they can give, often working closely with their Enforcer Circle to do so. Membership in such Circles usually consists of older women not fit for the more physical Enforcer Circles, but still dangerous in their psychic powers and camaraderie with the Restless. Over the years, these women have established working relationships with certain spirits upon whom they can call for assistance.

## Myth and Fact

Creusans know the difference between wraiths and Spectres and in general seem to understand the abilities wraiths manifest, since they use them against Tertullians and as part of their candidate screening process. However, they know very little about Underworld politics and thus are under the impression that the Tertullians are working with a group of ghosts known as the "Hierarchy." Why the Tertullians would do such a thing remains a mystery, but that is what their "Renegade" contacts tell them, and that is what they must believe, for lack of more information....

## Resources

Typical Circles, while not rich, are usually well-off, as their members tend to donate a good portion of their outside income to supporting the group. Refuges of the indoor variety may contain computers, fax machines, photocopiers, and whatever else is needed for the Circle's efficient operation. Creusan Rings donate cars to their Enforcer Circles, who often also have firearms and other weapons at their disposal.

## Ranking System

The Daughters of Creusa are largely informal about titles and ranking systems. They gather together in a spirit of sisterhood and choose by secret ballot those to lead who are best suited for it and will most benefit their Circles.

## Current Projects

Most Creusan "projects" revolve around helping the needy and enforcing the punishment of crimes. Some sample undertakings follow:

- The American Tertullians are pursuing a Syrian Daughter who escaped their torture chamber. She does not speak English and is still lost somewhere in the Midwest. The Midwest Ring of Creusan Daughters is trying to find her before the Tertullians do. To help her Syrian Circle solve the Tertullian problem, the Midwest Circle is loaning them Enforcers who will escort her, when found, safely back to Syria.

- A wraith has appeared before the Lisbon *sophistes* begging for justice. Apparently, she was a Daughter until captured by Tertullians, tortured, and killed. The Lisbon Circle is investigating her report of a splinter group called St. James....

- A scholar of the occult in London has approached one of the Greek Daughters about joining a society called the Arcanum. He claims that they are always in need of psychics and channelers. She rejected his offer, thinking it might be a prank, but this news has her Circle deeply concerned with the fact that he was able to track her down. They are investigating this "Arcanum."

# The Thrill Seekers



*If necessity is the mother of invention, its father must be boredom.*—E. G.

Thrill seekers are almost by definition a strange lot. Motivated by boredom, addiction to excitement (some would say these are two sides of the same coin), desire to be viewed as unusual, a narcissistic wish for power over death, a true death wish, or just plain curiosity, they engage in activities that others consider crazy. Bungee jumping or jumping off buildings with only a harness and some nylon between you and the unforgiving concrete are not the only forms of thrill seeking, though this is what immediately comes to most people's minds. In the World of Darkness, a number of other equally, if not more, dangerous activities occupy the time of a small core of people.

These activities include, but are not limited to, channeling and hunting wraiths and Spectres, baiting Spectres and Malfeans, destroying and becoming Fetters (by means of Lifeweb), and "playing pinball" with Artificers who are Riding the Electron Highway. A number of small organizations have come into being to regulate the activities of these thrill seekers; other organizations exist simply because of a common interest in specific forms of dangerous behavior.

The organizations described below consist of both the "responsible" and the "fraternal" types of thrill-seeking communities. All of them know something of the Underworld, or they would not be able to engage in the activities they do; yet, they do not know everything, for an element of chance must exist for the activity to remain compelling.

## The Wisteria Prophets

An organization hearkening back to the Victorian spiritist tradition of the late 1800s, the Wisteria Prophets have now become primarily a thrill-seeking circle of middle-aged channelers. They meet on Sunday evenings in the beautiful wisteria gardens of the small Museum of Victoriana in Littlemore, England, and, during inclement weather, in the basement of the Museum.

The Prophets were founded in 1882 in Oxford by Lord Alfred Whitingshire, a self-described channeler and sometime poet. With his death in WWI, they were forced to move to Littlemore, where Sir Geoffrey Albingsly, a sickly and often depressed member, maintained a residence large enough to accommodate their meetings. A staunchly conservative group, the Prophets always tried to preserve the Victorian atmosphere of their seances and other activities. In 1925, shortly before he died, Sir Albingsly began to convert his residence into a Victorian museum, where the Prophets could continue to meet even after he died. After willing the museum to the Prophets in 1926, Albingsly

committed suicide in the vain hope that they would be able to channel his released spirit.

The Wisteria Prophets today number only nine, but none of these nine have missed a meeting since joining the group. True to tradition, they gather around crystal balls, Ouija boards and planchettes to witness as wraiths rap on tables, levitate objects, play music, and prophesy. Sometimes they even give demonstrations to the public.

Still, most members find this tradition a little too quaint; they prefer to engage in more dangerous activities: private channeling sessions during which members attempt to channel wraiths and Spectres (the latter is more dramatic) and ghosthunting trips in which they try to scare themselves by summoning the dead in haunted locales. Five years ago, a member died from a broken neck during one of these trips when a Spectre appeared and pushed him from the balcony of a haunted hotel. Since then, the Prophets have become a little more cautious, but not nearly cautious enough.

### Entrance Criteria

The Wisteria Prophets welcome anyone as long as he or she believes in ghosts. They look askance at skeptics, who tend to ruin their fun.

### Attitude

A generally harmless bunch, the Prophets seek refuge from a humdrum life by engaging in dangerous practices like channeling Spectres. While they do take precautions, such as strapping Spectre-possessed channelers to chairs, they enjoy the rush they get from daring fate and risking their souls.

### Organization

The Prophets themselves do not have any formal organization; however, in order to maintain the Museum, they have appointed a director and a financial officer. These two, Elizabeth Walker and Toby Jenkins, take donations from the Prophets, organize seminars and tours, and purchase additional victoriana. Every three years, the Prophets vote to appoint someone to these positions, but for the last ten years, Walker and Jenkins have been the only ones to run. It should be mentioned that, during seances and other group activities, the Prophets need an informal leader to direct their efforts. Elizabeth Walker usually takes this role, although she will readily relinquish it if someone else wishes to take over.

### Myth and Fact

The Prophets have very little accurate information about the Underworld. For instance, they believe that ghosts change from wraiths to Spectres and back again in conjunction with the phases of the moon, and that barghests are actually the spirits of channelers, trapped in the Underworld while the medium is possessed.



R.M.

## Resources

Although Albingsly willed his entire estate to the Prophets, the group possesses only what its members bring to it. The Museum stays solvent primarily through fundraising activities and high admission fees, and the Prophets use some of these monies to purchase needed equipment, such as a computer, laser printer, and photocopier, as well as to pay the landscapers to take care of the garden. Members pay out of pocket for travel expenses.

## Ranking System

The Wisteria Prophets have no formal hierarchy, although they can be cliquish, dividing themselves into factions of starving artists and wealthy, unemployed widows and widowers. Despite this social barrier, the Prophets get along very well together and generally respect one another.

## Current Projects

Walker and Jenkins frequently arrange activities for Sunday nights, as well as organizing Friday- and Saturday-night visits to haunted locales. The following are some upcoming activities they have planned:

- A trip deep into the moors of Scotland, where, for the last five months, luminescent Spectres have been appearing under the new moon to reenact a murder scene. Walker will try to channel one of these Spectres.

- A weekend trip to board a haunted fishing troller that Walker found in The Wash near Skegness, England while diving there. The Prophets will be scuba diving at night to get to it and then silently trying to channel whoever died there.

- A hunting trip to a cottage in the countryside near Dublin where a member of the IRA died violently on Christmas Eve. The group will summon the ghost and attempt a Minor Binding (see Chapter 3 for rules).

## The Bloo Moons

This group of malicious and devious thrill-seekers intentionally destroys wraiths for fun. They call themselves the Bloo Moons just to be different, and bait Spectres for the excitement of seeing wraiths die. They differ from kids who pull the wings off flies and dissect live cats only in that they are much less naïve. Those who know of them believe that the original leader was a Benandante who should never have been Unhooded. When the secrets of Unhooding were revealed to him, he began to collect a gang of miscreants who, like him, were born with cauls and had been Unhooded. Some hypothesize that the Bloo Moons have actually become spectral Fetters.

All of the original members of the Bloo Moons are now dead, save one. Before he fell into a coma peering into a Nihil, he found six new members for the gang that today continues to feed innocent wraiths into hungry spectral

maws. They do so using trickery and deceit, by directing Enfants into the Tempest or by spreading rumors that draw older wraiths there. With some practice, they have learned how to produce the spectral scream that draws Spectres and sometimes Malfeans to feed on the bait in their traps.

As in some gangs, there are a few dissidents within the Bloo Moons who do not believe that what they are doing is right, but the peer pressure is such that they do it anyway. Should one of these gang members become leader in the future, however, the Bloo Moons could use their knowledge to benefit, not destroy, wraiths. In the meantime, the Bloo Moons consider wraiths their playthings.

## Entrance Criteria

Potential new Bloo Moons must be streetwise, tough, and Unhooded. Like any gang, the Bloo Moons don't accept just anyone; newbies have to prove themselves, maybe by killing an Enfant, maybe by getting drunk and stepping into the Tempest. There is no formal test that recruits must pass to get in, but every gang member has gone through an initiation. Generally, recruits also have to put up with being ranked on, and they have to be very sure they don't do something stupid until the next new guy (or gal) comes along. The Benandanti who know of the Bloo Moons want to extinguish them. To them, the gang represents everything that is bad about humanity; in turn, the Bloo Moons view Benandanti as "Boy Scouts," and delight in tormenting the rare Benandante they run across.

## Attitude

Bad. In some ways, the Bloo Moons could be classified as Hunters rather than thrill seekers, but once the novelty of killing wraiths wears off, they will become bored and find some other destructive occupation. Because they are following an ideology, on the other hand, hunters usually hunt and do not give up or get bored.

## Organization

The leader of the Bloo Moons is currently a ruthless jerk named Fargo. Some of his gang members believe Fargo is crazy, but they don't want to take off because they are afraid he'll kill them without a second thought. Fargo rules by fear alone.

The Bloo Moons hang out in an abandoned shed in the bad part of San Jose. Most of them have been arrested at least once, usually for theft and possession of illegal substances, never for drug trafficking. In that sense, other gangs have no reason to bother them, but sometimes they are just so obnoxious that they invite trouble.

## Myth and Fact

Because the Bloo Moons can see into and enter the Underworld, they know what the Underworld is like firsthand. However, they believe that wraiths and Spectres are fundamentally animals, and they are no believers in the SPCA. Wraiths, if they knew, could use this misconcep-

tion against them, as the Bloo Moons expect them to be no more intelligent than apes.

## Resources

The gang lives by stealing, so whatever they can get their hands on, they have. Most of them have motorcycles.

## Ranking System

Fargo leads, the rest follow. Challenges to his leadership are likely to be met with quick, ruthless violence; one gang member learned this after losing his left eye (ironically, he can now use this eye to see clearly in the Tempest). Among the other gang members, whoever seems the strongest or the most dangerous wins, but there generally aren't many fights between them, as they consider themselves brothers.

## Current Projects

The Bloo Moons are getting ready for another Tempest Run, as they call it. This one will involve finding Enfants and throwing them headlong into a Nihil to see what happens.

## Solo Artists

Many individuals prefer to work alone, outside the strictures of an organization. Although they lack the benefits derived from membership in the ghosthunting organizations that seek justice, knowledge, power, or thrills, they also enjoy the freedoms that their organized counterparts do not. Below are some ideas for "solo artists" you can use in your chronicle or create (with the Storyteller's blessing).

- Mortal Freelancers:

Individuals who hire out their ghosthunting talents to others for a fee. Payment may be taken in money or in something else of value to the freelancer, such as a rare occult book or, depending on the freelancer's nature, the very soul of the employer. Most freelancers who are hunters entered the business via friends or relatives and many work for hunter or knowledge-seeking organizations.

- Spectres and Shadows:

Occasionally, a Spectre or a wraith's own Shadow will hire itself out as a freelancer to hunt other beings of the Underworld, particularly when it has a vendetta against a certain group or individual which it wants to see satisfied. The payment often forms part of the attraction that made the creature hire itself out to begin with: why not get paid to do something you were going to do anyway?

## The Pinball Wizards

In 1992, a group of five MIT computer science students with a mutual interest in the occult were holding a seance in their dorm when the screensaver running on one of their Macintoshes suddenly began to speak. The sexy blonde on the screen told them that her murdered body was decaying in one of the mysterious steam tunnels running underneath the school and that she wanted vengeance for her death. After searching for evidence of a prank and discovering nothing, they climbed into the tunnels to begin their investigation. At around 3 A.M. the following morning, one of them discovered the decomposing body of a blonde woman, the strangle marks on her neck still visible. When the whole thing blew over, the students — who were initially under suspicion — were relieved that the police had found the murderer.

After the police investigation, they searched for clues as to what the screensaver incident had meant. After they had conducted a myriad of experiments on the computer, the only conclusion they could draw was that the spirit of the dead woman had actually spoken to them through the screensaver. Their next question was how.

After months of experimentation, they came upon the answer: they concluded that spirits of the dead could somehow "possess" electrons and entire machines. To test their theory, they, with the aid of Professor Mackay — an old E.E. professor who had an interest in ghosts — set up their computer to reroute electricity into a pinball machine they had in their room. Mackay, secretly a member of the Arcanum, told them that he knew how to summon and bind the ghost so that it did not release the possessed electrons (see "Character Creation" for rules). He set up the experiment, and, when the ghost arrived, the students rerouted her into the pinball machine, which promptly went wild: the flippers moved back and forth on their own, while colored lights angrily flickered on and off.

The students were so impressed that they asked Mackay to join them in conducting further experiments. Arguing that he was too old to evoke the wrath of the Restless, he declined, but he gave them the complex blueprints that showed how to trap spirits in machines (see rules for Ephemera, Major Binding, and Dismissal in Chapter 3).

Because of their success, the five students called themselves The Pinball Wizards and endeavored to learn more about this phenomenon. Since 1992, the Wizards have learned not only how to reroute and trap spirits other than those who, in game terms, use Inhabit, but also how to play pinball and electric guitar with them, and how to power all manner of things, including an electric car (a dangerous, but fun activity, as the angry spirit may try to retaliate while they are driving), an electric toothbrush, and a massager. The wraiths trapped within these devices (especially the massager) are furious and, if they ever get out, will doubtless

devise fitting punishments for the students responsible. But for now, the students are carefree and having fun.

### Entrance Criteria

The Wizards are not necessarily closed to outsiders, but, unless the outsider was extremely enthusiastic about their experiments, they would find him or her a bit strange. Of course, the outsider must have some knowledge useful to them (e.g., electronics, computers, occult) or he will simply be ignored.

### Attitude

The Wizards are cognizant of the fact that the spirits they trap become furious and dangerous, but the promise of more excitement compels them to continue their experiments. Although rather callous about the spirits' feelings and situations, they nonetheless are not evil — merely extremely selfish.

### Organization

The Wizards meet most nights in their dorm room to work on their experiments. Students in nearby rooms have filed a number of complaints against them because they are often very loud; but so far they haven't gotten kicked out. One of the younger Wizards, Steve Britton, is trying to convince one of the Physics professors to loan him the key to the lab for "extra credit" experiments.

### Myth and Fact

The Wizards know only as much as they have seen; consequently, they believe that ghosts are generally weak creatures, most of them rather stupid and easily trapped. The subtleties of wraith society would not interest them even if they found a spirit willing to talk; their interest is entirely in the practical applications of "ghost science".

### Resources

The Wizards have only those resources available to typical students at MIT — a computer or two, a number of labs, and a great library. However, more than one has wealthy parents, and if they could persuade them to offer financial assistance for their "thesis project" — without getting into the details thereof — they might be able to afford more. Along the same lines, Dave Chung is researching experimental organizations that might be willing to offer grants to the Wizards for research, though he is hesitant to reveal the exact nature of their projects.

### Ranking System

Dave Chung, a senior, is Project Leader, and he has the final say in what the Wizards do. Other than that one formality, the Wizards have no real ranking system.



## Current Projects

The Pinball Wizards have a wish list of projects a mile high; though they don't even know where to start on some of them, they intend to find out everything they can.

- Devise a machine that can trap multiple spirits at once.

- Improve the existing rerouter so that it cannot be detected or overloaded. Currently, if a wraith knows the trap is set, he can spring it before entering by overloading the circuit. This is a pain, as it requires a few hours to reset the rerouter.

- Devise a rerouting controller that sends the spirit out onto the Internet to fetch passwords and data and ensures that the spirit returns.

- Invent a reliable "Ouija" computer, through which the spirits of the dead could transmit extensive messages, perhaps even write books on what the Afterlife is like.
- Understand the means by which spirit energy and electricity are related — and possibly find a means of converting one to the other.
- Discover the physical properties of spirits: what are they capable of doing? Under what conditions can they function best?
- Research the possibility of a superconductive substance containing trapped spirits.



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# Chapter Three: Character Creation



ghosthunters, both solo artists and members of organizations, comprise a wide variety of personality types shaped by very different experiences. This chapter discusses how to focus the character creation process so that your selection of these personalities and experiences results in a ghosthunter you'll enjoy playing.

You'll notice some differences between the character sheets for ghosthunters and those for wraiths. Ghosthunters,

for instance, have seven Health levels, while wraiths have 10 levels of Corpus. Ghosthunters also lack sections for Passions, Arcanos, Fetters, and Pathos, as they have none of these. However, ghosthunters may have Numina, Talismans, and so forth, and these are reflected in the ghosthunting character sheet at the back of this book. Use the chart on the next page to focus your creativity and narrow down the direction in which you think you want to take your character.

# Character Creation Outline

## Step One: Character Concept: Who are you?

- Choose Nature, Demeanor, Membership
- Determine Concept, Motivation, and Catalyst

## Step Two: Select Attributes

- Prioritize your three categories: Primary 6, Secondary 4, Tertiary 3
- Choose Physical Traits: Strength, Stamina, and Dexterity
- Choose Social Traits: Charisma, Manipulation, and Appearance
- Choose Mental Traits: Perception, Intelligence, and Wits

## Step Three: Select Abilities

- Prioritize your three categories: Talents, Skills and Knowledges
- Choose Talents: What can you do naturally?
- Choose Skills: What are you trained to do?
- Choose Knowledges: What have you studied?

## Step Four: Select your Advantages

- Choose Background Traits (5)

## Step Five: Finishing Touches

- Record Base Willpower (3)
- Spend Freebie Points (21) on Numina, optional Merits and Flaws (in **Wraith Players Guide**), or to increase Attributes, Abilities, Willpower, or Backgrounds.
- Record Personalia: Appearance, Home, Talismans, etc.

## Step One: Character Concept

Begin by formulating a character concept. It need not be highly detailed, as you will flesh out your character through the character creation process and during play. For now, simply find a concept that you have a strong interest in exploring.

### Personality Archetypes

Choosing a Nature and Demeanor (from Chapter Six, **Wraith: the Oblivion**) should be another way of defining your character. Is her outward behavior an accurate representation of who she is, or is she constantly trying to be something she's not? Your choice of Nature and Demeanor can help you to answer some of the questions about the character's background.

### Membership

Does your character belong to an organization or does she prefer to work alone? Give careful thought to the manner in which your character's personality type and background fits into or finds itself at odds with her organization. If you think that a character's personality would be too much at odds with the majority of an organization's members, you might want to create a solo artist, a ghosthunter who works on her own. Regardless, your character should be someone who can fit in with the other characters in your group.

### Concept

Finding a strong concept entails deciding in general terms what your character is like. Is he a private investigator, doubting supernatural explanations in favor of more "rational" ones? Or is she a housewife, just trying to figure out why the furniture keeps moving around in the new house? While seeking out ghosts may be a large part of your character's life, what does she think herself to be?

### Motivation

Why does your character seek out the Restless Dead? Some of the motivations offered in this book are knowledge, power, and thrills. If these don't suit your character, by all means — make one up! The point here is to develop a reason for your character to continue the chase.

### Catalyst

After deciding on a motivation, think about what caused your character to become a ghosthunter in the first place. What event or realization catalyzed this motivation? Was it a personal tragedy (Spectres consumed your lover's soul), a strong mentor figure, a glimpse through the Shroud? Whatever the catalyst, it should be something profound and lasting.

## Step Two: Choosing Attributes

Your character starts with one free dot in each Attribute, the minimum rating possible. Distribute 6 dots in Primary Attributes, 4 dots in Secondary, and 3 in Tertiary.

## Step Three: Choosing Abilities

This step is handled in the same manner as Ability selection for wraiths. Prioritize your character's abilities according to Talents, Skills, and Knowledges, then choose from those listed in *Wraith*, substituting Spiritual Alertness for Awareness, and Body Reading for Meditation. Additional Abilities are listed at the end of this chapter. Your character starts with 11 dots for Primary, 7 dots for Secondary, and 4 dots for Tertiary Abilities. Note that you should not go over three dots in any Ability yet; use Freebie points to raise your scores higher if you like.

## Step Four: Select Advantages

Just as wraiths have Backgrounds, so do ghoshtuners. Backgrounds from *Wraith* appropriate for ghoshtunting characters are Allies, Artifacts, Contacts, Mentor, Notoriety, and Status (within your organization), with the Storyteller's permission. Additional Backgrounds are listed in this chapter. Your character starts out with 5 points to allocate in Backgrounds.

## Step Five: Finishing Touches

Now that you have the basis for your character, breathe life into him or her with the details. Now is the time to record your base Willpower (3), choose your Merits and Flaws (optional), distribute your 21 Freebie Points, and record personalia.

### Willpower

Willpower is extremely important in preventing Fog reactions and helping power some Numina. Your character begins with a base Willpower of 3, though you may increase this by spending freebie points.

### Freebie Points

"Freebie Points" may be used to purchase Numina, Merits, or to increase Attributes, Abilities, Backgrounds and Willpower. Flaws may be chosen to add "Freebie Points", up to a maximum of five. See *Wraith Players Guide* for a full listing of Merits and Flaws.

| Trait              | Cost       |
|--------------------|------------|
| Attributes         | 5 per dot  |
| Abilities          | 2 per dot  |
| Backgrounds        | 1 per dot  |
| First Numina Type  | 7 per dot  |
| Second Numina Type | 14 per dot |
| Extra rituals      | 3 per dot  |
| Willpower          | 2 per dot  |

## Merits and Flaws (optional)

Using the *Wraith Players Guide*, purchase Merits with extra Freebie Points; taking Flaws will give you additional Freebie Points. Obviously, your Storyteller will have to determine whether the Merits and Flaws you pick are appropriate to your character and to the chronicle as a whole.

### Numina

See *Numina*, below.

Numina are the powers that ordinary mortals do not have: Hedge Magic, Psychic Abilities, and True Faith. You may use your Freebie Points to purchase Numina recommended or required for your organization. If you are a Solo Artist and you purchase a Numina power, be sure to provide an adequate explanation for why your character would have this rare ability. Remember, it's perfectly all right to create a completely "mundane" character; don't believe for a second that you need to have "super powers" to fit in to a hunters game.

### Record Personalia

Finally, record such details as where your character lives and what he or she looks like. Does he live in a mansion, a monastery, or an apartment? If the latter, does he share the rent with others? What does this mean for him when he comes in at four in the morning after hunting ghosts all night? Does he have any quirks (aside from little ones like ghoshtunting)? If he works, what does he do?

## New Abilities

### New Talents



Like other Talents, ghoshtunting Talents are not achieved through study; rather, your character either possesses them at an intuitive level or acquires them through experience.

### Spiritual Alertness

You are aware of the spiritual world around you, even if you cannot see it directly. Most people have this talent to some degree or other: when a ghost touches them, they feel a chill run down their spine or suddenly have the strange feeling they are being watched. Spiritual Alertness enhances this effect so that the individual can, without actually seeing into the Underworld, distinguish spiritual sensations.

This Talent differs from Awareness (see *Wraith: The Oblivion*) in that those who possess it are specifically aware of the presence of ghosts, and not of occult or supernatural things in general. Note that to you, wraiths and Spectres might be "good" and "evil" ghosts respectively, positively

or negatively charged spiritual energy, or whatever concept is most appropriate to your world view. Take some time to think about what kind of Spiritual Awareness your character would possess.

- **Novice:** You do not have to be touched by a ghost to feel its presence.
- **Practiced:** You can sense whether or not there is more than one ghost around you.
- **Competent:** You can distinguish between wraiths and Spectres if they are touching you.
- **Expert:** You can distinguish between wraiths and Spectres if they are nearby.
- **Master:** You can sense a spiritual trap lying in wait.

**Possessed by:** Ghoshtuners, Field Researchers, Channelers

**Specialties:** Powerful Wraiths, Malfeans, Barghests

## New Skills

### Body Reading

You can tell what people are thinking by the almost imperceptible body gestures they make. You sense their emotions and can determine whether or not they are hiding something. Some may call this intuition, but in reality it is a skill of finely tuned perception, keen attentiveness to body language, and — most importantly — correct interpretation of nonverbal communication.

- **Novice:** You notice and can correctly interpret obvious gestures, such as failure to meet someone's eyes, and body language, such as crossed legs.
- **Practiced:** You can interpret more subtle gestures, such as eye movement and foot position.
- **Competent:** You can correctly interpret the body language of a salesperson.
- **Expert:** You can correctly interpret the body language of a politician.
- **Master:** You can correctly interpret the body language of a gifted actor.

**Possessed by:** Fortune Tellers, Channelers, Priests

**Specialties:** Children, Women, Men

## New Knowledges

Because hunters involve themselves in the affairs of the Underworld in different ways, they have varying levels of knowledge about the denizens and geography of the Underworld. "Hunter Knowledges" represent in game terms the level of understanding of the Underworld that a hunter has attained about a particular subject. Hunters acquire these knowledges in means as varied as their hunting

methods. Some hit the books, others serve as Consorts, while still others are trained by their organizations.

Starting characters generally have very few, if any, of these knowledges. It is suggested that Storytellers require characters to acquire a rating of Occult 4 or higher with a specialization in ghosts before they allow them to gain any of the knowledges listed below. Note also that the higher the level of knowledge an individual possesses, the more likely it is that the Hierarchy is after him for having knowledge that he shouldn't.

### Beliefs

If a hunter wishes to involve himself, in a wise manner, in the affairs of the Underworld, he must first understand the politics, and thus the beliefs, of wraith society. Without such an understanding, he becomes an easy target for manipulation by the unscrupulous Dead. Beliefs allows hunters to know where certain wraiths are coming from and what their known agendas are.

- **Novice:** Knows of the existence of wraith factions, but not their names.
- **Practiced:** Knows of the existence of the Heretics, the Hierarchy, and the Renegades.
- **Competent:** Knows that the Hierarchy is the most powerful group, and that the Heretics and Renegades oppose them.
- **Expert:** Knows of Transcendence and Oblivion (by name).
- **Master:** Knows in detail the philosophies espoused by one of these groups.

### Denizens

Hunters wishing to learn more about the Underworld would do well to first learn about its denizens, as they provide the easiest (although sometimes the most inaccurate) form of information about it. Denizens Knowledge covers information known both about wraiths and about those who are consumed by the Shadow.

- **Novice:** Knows the difference between a wraith and a Spectre.
- **Practiced:** Knows of the Underworld's slave trade. Has heard the terms Drones, Enfants, and Reapers.
- **Competent:** Understands the differences between the Heretics, the Hierarchy, and the Renegades. May be involved with members of these groups. Knows what Deathlords are.
- **Expert:** Knows what a Shadow is, has heard of Malfeans, barghests, and Ferrymen.
- **Master:** Possesses a depth, in addition to a breadth, of knowledge covering Heretics, Hierarchy, Renegades, Spectres, Malfeans, Shadows, Drones, Enfants, Lemures, Reapers, Legions, Ferrymen, or Deathlords.



## Destruction of Spirits

Many mortals see the Dead as a threat to the living. Their one goal is thus to eliminate that threat. Still others view the Dead as more passively dangerous and wish to know how to protect themselves if conflict arises. Destruction of Spirits Knowledge covers the details of how to destroy a spirit or eliminate (permanently or temporarily) the threat it poses.

- **Novice:** Knows that to destroy a wraith on the physical plane means that it has only become incorporeal and thus still exists in the Underworld. Knows that ghosts have Corpse on the spiritual plane.
- **Practiced:** Knows certain limited things — e.g., that a Maelstrom hurts wraiths, that Spectres inhabit Maelstroms and thus cannot be destroyed by them, or that the Restless — including mortal souls (if able to walk the Underworld) — can destroy each other.
- **Competent:** Knows how to manipulate the system — e.g., use the slave trade to get rid of pesky Enfants and Lemures. May perform exorcisms and Warding or Forbiddance rituals, though success is not guaranteed.
- **Expert:** Knows about darksteel and barrow-flame. Knows of an Artifact that will cause damage to spirits.
- **Master:** Knows to destroy a wraith's Fetters (or use them to get at a wraith) and sources of Memoriam (i.e., those who provide the emotional energy that fuels a wraith's Lifeweb). Also may know how to forge simple weapons that can be wielded in the Underworld.

## Geography

This knowledge gives hunters an idea of the layout of the Underworld, and the political or spiritual territories each area represents. It covers political boundaries — such as Stygia — as well as Underworld phenomena, such as the Tempest, Maelstroms, and Nihil.

- **Novice:** Knows that there are places and things in the Underworld to avoid (e.g., the Tempest, Maelstroms, Nihil), but not their locations or their names.
- **Practiced:** Distinguishes among Stygia, the Shadowlands, and the Tempest. Knows their characteristics and their inhabitants.
- **Competent:** Has heard of the Far Shores. May have glimpsed the Shadowlands, or perhaps Stygia.
- **Expert:** Visits Necropoli with some regularity or has peered into the Tempest.

- **Master:** Knows as much about the Underworld as an experienced wraith does. Understands what the Shadowlands, Stygia, the Far Shores, the Tempest, Haunts, Maelstroms, Necropoli and Citadels are. May also have some incidental knowledge of Nihilis, the Labyrinth, and byways in the Tempest.

## History

It has been said that without knowledge of the past, one cannot adequately predict the course of the future. The history of the Underworld would make a tremendously long textbook, as it begins with the origins of death itself. Long and complicated though it might be, however, it still merits attention, as it gives hunters an understanding of the origins of the current system in the Underworld and a feeling for what the future there might be like. Note that the History Knowledge only indicates how much of what the character knows is *true*; someone with only one dot may have gotten a lot of information that was wrong.

- **Novice:** Has heard of Charon and the discontent of the Renegades during the Pax Romana.
- **Practiced:** Knows that the Maelstrom and the Tempest have increased in strength over the centuries. Knows the unsettling history of the Maelstroms.
- **Competent:** Has heard of the Lady of Fate and knows the Dictum Mortem by heart. Understands that the Hierarchy remains a tribute to the feudalism of a bygone era, and knows the history of the great Evacuation.
- **Expert:** Wonders if Charon was the same man behind the mask, or many different men. Knows the history of the Guilds.
- **Master:** Is aware of the information in "A Revision of the Imperial History of Stygia" (see *Wraith: The Oblivion*, pp. 43-56).

## Powers

Wraiths and Spectres exhibit powers beyond mortal ken, powers rarely seen in the Skinlands. Powers Knowledge enables hunters to understand these Arcanos or the spectral powers being used around or against them. Power Knowledge must be gained separately for wraith Arcanos and spectral powers.

- **Novice:** Knows the characteristics of one Arcanos or one shade power.
- **Practiced:** Knows the characteristics of two Arcanos or shade powers.
- **Competent:** Knows the characteristics of three Arcanos or shade powers.
- **Expert:** Knows the characteristics of four Arcanos or shade powers.
- **Master:** Knows the characteristics of five Arcanos or shade powers.



## Underworld Miscellanea

Underworld Miscellanea knowledge covers the many pieces of knowledge pertaining to the Underworld besides those dealing with its inhabitants, politics, and geography. Such "trivia" often proves more useful than it seems when a hunter is confronted by a hostile spirit or an unknown Artifact.

- **Novice:** Knows detailed information about one of the following items, or generalities about two of them: certain relics, certain artifacts, cauls, plasm, Fetters, Passions, the Eidolon, the Shadow, oboli, Memoriam, Pathos, darksteel, the Fog, the Shroud, the importance of masks, deathmarks, ghosthunters, Projectors, etc.
- **Practiced:** Knows details about two items, or generalities about three of them.
- **Competent:** Knows details about three items, or generalities about four.
- **Expert:** Knows details about four items, or generalities about five.
- **Master:** Knows details about five items, or generalities about six.

## Other Knowledges

### Herbalism

You have a working knowledge of herbs and their properties, medicinal and otherwise. You can find and prepare herbs and know which herb or blend of herbs to use for any situation. This skill will also provide knowledge of the magical lore of plants.

- **Novice:** Read a book on it once.
- **Practiced:** Serious student.
- **Competent:** Local supplier.
- **Expert:** Author of books on herbalism.
- **Master:** Herbal doctor.

Possessed by: Holistic Healers, New Agers, Wise Women, Sophistes, Members of Traditional Cultures

Specialties: Culinary, Medicinal, Poisonous, Narcotics, Hallucinogens, Spirit

### Organization Knowledge

You know the history of your organization through the ages, from its inception to the modern day. This skill can be purchased separately for the history of other organizations, as well.

- **Novice:** Interested Outsider.
- **Practiced:** New Initiate.
- **Competent:** Practiced Acolyte.
- **Expert:** Council Authority.
- **Master:** Founding member.

Possessed by: Scholars, Enthusiasts, Organization Members

Specialties: Sons of Tertullian, Alternate Energy Group, Arcanum, Benandanti, etc.

## Rituals

You know the appropriate pomp and circumstance requisite for the completion of organizational duties. But even more important than the average knowledge, you have knowledge of secret organizational ceremonies that are part of the Ritualistic formulae effective against the supernatural. They must be used in conjunction with Numina for any effect to occur, and they must be purchased separately for each ceremony learned. You do not need to have memorized these ceremonies; they can be recorded on paper, on computer, or anywhere else that is handy.

- **Novice:** You've read someone else's notes.
- **Practiced:** You can recite/perform the basic ceremony.
- **Competent:** You know what to do, without fail.
- **Expert:** People recognize your expertise.
- **Master:** You can ad-lib and no one will know.

Possessed by: Exorcists, Priests, Occult Researchers, other organization members

Specialties: Varies by organization

## Adapted and New Backgrounds



ome Backgrounds listed in *Wraith: The Oblivion* obviously do not apply to ghosthunters (for example, Haunt and Memoriam). Others work for ghosthunters with the modifications that follow:

### Allies

Allies are those who aid characters but are not members of their organizations. Scholarly characters may have few allies, as their noses are stuck in their books instead of into other people's business. Thrill- and power-seeking characters may have more allies (and contacts), since theirs are more people-oriented activities.

### Artifact

Characters who are capable of traveling into the Underworld (e.g., the Benandanti or Bloo Moons) may purchase this Background. If a character owns an Artifact that magnifies Arcanos, she cannot use its powers directly, but she can trade it or use it for leverage with wraiths.

### Contacts

Characters may make contacts with both the living and the dead. Again, scholarly characters are less likely to have, but are not wholly barred from having, contacts, while power-seekers are likely to have many of them.

## Eidolon

Living characters have fewer direct experiences with their "higher self," so this is a rare Background to have. However, the dead do not suddenly "generate" an Eidolon upon dying; the higher self is something that grows with you throughout life and sticks with you after death, just as your "lower self" (Shadow) does. Thus, ghosthunters may purchase the Eidolon Background. Eidolon gives your character a certain resistance to possession and spectral temptation. For each dot you have in Eidolon, you may add one additional die per session to any roll to resist spectral or Shadow powers. Certain groups, such as the Wisteria Prophets, may wish to purchase this Background to avert the chances of complete possession.

## Mentor

Mentors within your organization are often good sources of information or guidance. A mentor can help you learn new Numina, assuming she knows them. To do so, the player may roll a number of dice equal to the number of dots in Mentor; for Numina, each success subtracts one from the number of experience points needed to learn a specific Numina.

## Resources

Being a wealthy ghosthunter is a definite boon, particularly if you want to research or hunt full-time. As with any Background, you should record the source of your character's wealth.

- **Small savings:** You have an apartment and perhaps a motorcycle. If liquidated, you would have \$1000 in cash. Allowance of \$500 a month.
- **Middle class:** You have an apartment or condominium. If liquidated, you would have \$8,000 in cash. Allowance of \$1200 a month.
- **Large savings:** You own a house (or at least have some equity). If liquidated, you would have \$50,000 in cash. Allowance of \$3000 a month.
- **Well-off:** You own a large house, or perhaps a dilapidated country manor. If liquidated, you would have \$500,000 in cash. Allowance of \$9000 a month.
- **Fantastically rich:** You are easily a millionaire many times over. If liquidated, you would have at least \$5,000,000 in cash. Allowance of \$30,000 a month.

## Status

Status for ghosthunters belonging to an organization works the same way as it does for wraiths belonging to or marked for recruitment by social groups in the Underworld.

## New Backgrounds

### Talismans

You possess a talisman (see "Fetishism" below) that you did not create. You may have been born with it (e.g., a caul), or you may have acquired it through your membership in an organization (e.g., an ECE) or by other means. Once the mystical powers in the talisman are expended, the talisman no longer functions. The level of the talisman determines this Background's level.

### Personal Library

Having an extensive library of supernatural topics can greatly aid a character's research. However, knowledgeable and accurate books on the supernatural, particularly on the Underworld, are difficult to acquire. Sometimes it takes years of research to find even one good tome. Still, to many scholarly researchers, the search is worth the effort, as a good personal library may yield invaluable clues to further research. Each dot in Personal Library counts as a success toward research rolls concerning the Underworld.

- A shelf full of rare and unique books.
- Several shelves full of rare and unique books.
- A bookcase full of rare and unique books.
- Several bookcases full of rare and unique books.
- A small room full of rare and unique books.

### Home Base

Most organizations require a regular meeting place or a base of operations in which to carry out the duties and goals of the organization. Many such locales have blessings or wards placed upon them, in addition to modern security measures, to protect them from hostile or mischievous supernatural entities such as ghosts. Each point in this Background gives five points for creating a home base. Note that it is possible for characters to combine their points into a shared base of operations.

### Sidekicks

Sidekicks are junior members or allies of your organization who may be indebted to you or want to work with/under you for reasons of their own. Assuming you treat them well, they are always loyal and are usually personal friends as well; you may have your differences, but a Sidekick will never betray you. Sidekicks are created using standard mortal character creation rules, but with fewer Freebie Points (see below). At higher levels, you can obtain Sidekicks with as many as or even more Freebie Points than your own character, but you risk losing the Sidekick if he ventures off on his own.

- Low-powered Sidekick (5 Freebie Points)
- Average Sidekick (10 Freebie Points)
- Above-average Sidekick (15 Freebie Points)
- Great Sidekick (21 Freebie Points)
- Super Sidekick (30 Freebie Points)

# Numina



certain ghosthunters have access to special advantages not available to the average human population. These advantages are called Numina and are comprised of three different Affinities: Hedge Magic, Psychic Ability, and True Faith. Hedge Magic is further divided into different Paths, and Psychic Ability into Phenomena. True Faith is different altogether; advancement is earned, not purchased, and Faith's effects are largely the Storyteller's option. Access to multiple Affinities is rare and usually too costly to consider for a beginning character. Even if the points are there, learning new Numina is very difficult; the character must find a mentor, peruse ancient texts, or devote long hours of study or practice to acquiring the new Affinity. As with everything, be sure that any Numina you choose make sense with your character.

## Affinity Costs

Numina Affinities cost seven character points for the initial dot and double that (14 points) for each additional starting dot of Affinity. If, for instance, you wanted to begin the game with both Telepathy and Ephemera, it would cost you 21 points. Obviously, specialization is helpful when learning the mystic arts (particularly when you have only 21 Freebie Points with which to start).

## Hedge Magic Paths Costs

Paths within the Hedge Magic Affinity cost only seven points apiece to begin, and each new dot includes one free Ritual of that Path level. These Rituals, which allow a magician some latitude within her art, cost three Freebie Points to purchase and three times the level of the Path to buy with experience. A level three Ritual would then cost nine points, while a first level one would only cost three.

## Psychic Phenomena Costs

Psychic Phenomena are harder to diversify. The first Phenomenon costs seven points, but any additional ones require 14 points to buy initially. Each dot after the original one costs only seven points. Thus, it is easier to get the hang of a new ability after breaking through to discover it. There is no such thing as a Psychic Ritual.

## Costs After Character Creation

Each Numina Affinity (except True Faith) costs its previous level  $\times 7$  to increase after character creation and requires an Attribute + Ability roll to perform (the types of rolls vary with the Path or Phenomena). Many also require some time and effort. This is largely a roleplaying opportunity, although Storytellers can assume that Hedge Magic Effects take at least one turn per level to set up and use.



Numina also require some kind of focus or ceremony to work. This can mean anything from a drawn-out rite involving Conjuration and Blacksmithing to a trance or deep meditation. Whatever the focus may be, it is essential and it must be performed in the same way every time or it will not work. Numina are not easily tossed off; they require work, skill, and time. Using Hedge Magic among the uninitiated is tricky. Many overt spells or abilities simply fail when observed by skeptics, which is why many organizations keep their abilities secret or do not allow skeptics to watch them perform their Numina. The difficulty of working around the "magic is impossible" paradigm could be reflected in complete failure, additional difficulties to spells cast in public or additional Attribute + Ability rolls (Manipulation + High Ritual, Charisma + Expression, etc.) which may be needed to convince an audience that such magic was possible. Psychic Ability is generally easier to use because it is often not as overt and because popular culture finds it easier to believe in. Still, levitating a sofa is going to be more than most people can accept.

## Systems

Hedge Magic and Psychic Abilities require study, ceremony, and concentration. The methods vary from art to art and place to place, but the mechanics for each Affinity are essentially the same:

- The level of the Path or Phenomena determines what the practitioner can do (Cursing is the exception to this).
- To perform Hedge Magic, some sort of ceremony must be conducted or some focus must be used. Rituals can take one turn per level of the magic (or even longer) and might require extended successes. Some Paths cost a point of Willpower each time a Ritual is used.
- Psychic Abilities are not instant powers. Users must concentrate upon whatever they are doing for the duration of the Effect. A focus may be necessary.
- An Attribute + Ability (usually Intelligence + Occult for magic and Intelligence + Alertness for ESP) roll should be made. Failure means the practitioner has to begin again, with +1 to her difficulty for each additional try.
- Hedge Magic's usual difficulty is the Path's level + 4. Psychic Abilities go against a difficulty of 8 or the target's Willpower, depending on the Effect.
- The amount of successes needed to achieve certain Hedge Magic Effects depends on the circumstances. Under normal conditions, only one success is necessary to work an easy Effect. More strenuous spells, such as lengthy Healings or difficult Fetishes, require one success per Path level before they work. Very difficult tasks, such as throwing up a Ward against a pissed-off Doppleganger, demand an additional penalty. The difficulty is raised by 2 for such labors, up to a maximum of 10.
- Willpower can be spent to grant an automatic success.



## Rituals

The dots describing Hedge Magic Effects define the general abilities of the art. Rituals within those Paths allow the practitioner a wider latitude with her actions. Such Rituals must be purchased separately (see the new Knowledge "Rituals" above) and are bound to the level of the Effect. A practitioner must attain a level in her Path in order to buy the corresponding Rituals which allow her to expand its possibilities. The particulars of the Rituals themselves are theoretically limitless. Some of them are described below (see "Special Rituals").

If you want to create additional Rituals, for rules purposes, use the Rituals suggestions mentioned at each level of the Paths to define the magic's game Effect. Narrate the story aspect of the spell as you see fit. A player may design her own Rituals if she can justify the research in story terms. However, her Storyteller should ensure that the power of the Ritual does not exceed the general Effects of the character's Path rating.

Although the particulars will vary from style to style, these Rituals require a bit of time to perform and often necessitate special objects like sacred relics, runes, holy water, inscribed circles, Ouija boards, planchettes, medicine bags, crystal balls, Tarot cards, blessed oil, cosmogonic eggs, liknons, tea leaves, or I Ching books. Generally, the more powerful the magic, the more complex the Ritual must be.

## Teamwork

Some forms of Hedge Magic demand that practitioners pool their resources. Most forms of Psychic Abilities are more potent if a number of talented people work together. To do so, the characters must share a common Path or Phenomena (Ephemera, Healing, and so forth). A conjurer cannot help a channeler contact the dead — he doesn't understand the nature of what his associate is doing.

When two or more characters with related Numina combine their efforts, one prime person makes the roll. Each helper rolls his or her Attribute + Ability as well; an additional turn may be required for each helper to join in. For each successful assistant, lower the difficulty of the prime character's roll by 1 to a minimum difficulty of 3. This isn't helpful for short, easy tasks, but can be vital when trying to pull off something really difficult, like levitating a car or Binding a mad Spectre, which might require extended rolls.

Teamwork failure usually leaves the prime character where she started, with no help or hindrance. Anyone who botches, however, adds +2 to the prime caster's difficulty or subtracts her successes if more than one is needed. If the task involved some sort of heavy power (a level 5 Effect, for instance), an unpleasant side-effect might be forthcoming....

## Hedge Magic: The Paths

Some talented ghosthunters can learn a very limited form of magic. Although most hunters do not typically perform for the general public, they may gain some believers (and some side income) if they do. However, some organizations frown upon such public display, as it often attracts unwanted attention from various quarters. Because of the problems associated with public performance, wise practitioners keep their art a secret unless they have good reason to do otherwise. And because of the general consensus against performance among Those Who Know, it is often difficult for a public practitioner to find a mentor to teach him additional secrets of the art.

That said, there are a variety of Hedge Magic Paths, each with a particular emphasis and structure. Their names are given for convenience only; a Persian fravashi is unlikely to refer to her spirit magic as "Ephemera." Each Path lists its general description, Effects, limitations, system roll, and the rituals necessary to do certain things. If you wish to design alternate Paths or Rituals, use the descriptions below as a guide. Remember, however, that Hedge Magic is not as flashy as your typical fantasy magic; practitioners do not hurl massive fireballs or cause huge bolts of lightning to come crackling from the sky. Hedge Magic is slow, difficult, low-key, and inextricably tied to a given style of magic.

### Cursing

Few ghosthunters practice this Path, but those who do find it useful in affecting ghosts in ways that other Paths cannot. It is one of the most ironical Paths, in that, according to traditional folklore, ghosts are supposed to curse the living; Cursing practitioners simply turn this tradition on its head. After all, the best defense is a good offense.

One of the oldest forms of magic, a Curse imparts some bad wish onto an offending party. This ranges from the Evil Eye to a group malediction. Though anybody can direct ill will at someone, this Path allows a Hedge Magic practitioner to vent his spleen with real effect. At its most basic level, such a curse quickly fouls up its victim's life (or unlife) and then dissipates. At its worst, potent Cursing can last for decades.

The severity of the Curse is usually bound to the dots in the character's Severity rating (the dots in his Path), and the effects usually only happen once. With a number of successes, however, the practitioner can make nasty things happen to more than one person in a given group. A practitioner cannot Curse someone more severely than his skill will allow (i.e. above the dots he has) if working alone. If he works with a group versed in the same Path, however, his anger carries more clout.

The basic system for Cursing is simple. The magician decides what he wants to inflict (within his ability), spends



one turn per level of Severity mystically collecting and focusing his hate, then discharges it in some cathartic fashion (a scream, a dance, etc.). His player rolls Manipulation + Intimidation to work the Effect and spends a point of Willpower. His successes are divided between Relation and Severity (player's choice), allowing a player to custom-tailor his Curse. The Curse's Effect occurs soon afterward, at some point and in some way determined by the Storyteller, not the practitioner; he may choose whom he affects, but not how they are affected.

Supernatural creatures such as ghosts may be cursed, but they can resist the Effect with a successful Willpower roll. This roll's difficulty will usually be 7 or 8, but might go as high as 9 if the practitioner was especially powerful or successful. If a Circle of wraiths is cursed, each wraith must roll Willpower individually. Naturally, the being in question has to be aware of the Curse in order to resist it. With some work (e.g., using Fatalism to read the victim's fate), wraiths can discover Curses placed upon them.

If, for instance, the *sophistes* Carmina Echevarria (with three dots in Curse) rolls four successes when Cursing the wraith Gianni who tarnished her family's honor, she could choose to inflict a serious injury or cause embarrassment to both the wraith and another member of his Circle. Gianni fails his Willpower roll, difficulty 7. Two nights later, one of the wraith's Memoria is "accidentally" destroyed (Severity 3). If Carmina had decided to humiliate the wraith and his Circle instead, Gianni's Memorium—his tombstone with an inscription in Latin—is discovered to read "Gianni's wife was great." Meanwhile, another member of the wraith's Circle is revealed to be Gianni's wife (Severity 2). Simple, but effective!

Unlike most forms of Hedge Magic, Cursing can focus the will of a group into a force more potent than a single practitioner could muster. By acting in concert (see "Teamwork," above), an angry pack of Curse-skilled occult *sophistes* could bring death and worse upon their enemies (thus starting a whole new ghosthunting Chronicle). In such cases, each additional member grants a new dot to the pool, adding to either Severity, Relation, or both. Carmina, therefore, could use up to four levels of Severity if she teamed up with Delilah, a Creusan Enforcer, to curse Gianni, and her difficulty drops by 1. In the case of group Curses, set the initial difficulty at 8 for simplicity.

Curses do not force events to happen or rearrange the laws of nature (although some occult scholars believe that true mages, if they indeed exist, would be capable of doing so). They do, however, subtly nudge things or people already in motion in the direction of the caster's intent. Such events will only strike when a strong possibility exists for them to do so, but, while a Curse may require days or even months to take effect, it *will* happen.

An especially skilled practitioner may invoke the Oblivion Curse (but only if she knows what Oblivion is) or the Death Curse. By spending *all* her permanent Willpower, the player can add that Willpower to her Curse dots

and divide the total as she sees fit between Severity and Relation. The wraith then turns into a mindless Drone (or if a living mortal, a husk) and is consumed by his Shadow (dies) soon after, burned out by inner hatred. A witch with minimal skill in Cursing might only get four or five dots to spend, but a powerful one could wither a whole Circle!

However, as any wise practitioner knows, rearranging the paths of fortune can backfire on you. Botching a Curse will bring the Effect back upon the caster in ways that should delight even the most sadistic Storytellers. Even if the roll is successful, there will always be some kind of fallout from a Curse, especially a severe one (wraiths stick around much longer than mortals...). The nature of this payback lies more with storytelling than with systems, but should be in line with the general power of the Curse and the ill will of the practitioner. Backripples range from dropping an expensive item (and having to pay for it) to the discovery of a Refuge, from physical ailments to psychical ones.

No Curse need be used at full potency. The caster may choose to revoke the Curse at any time prior to its Effect. A practitioner skilled in this Path can also try to undo another's Curse with a Wits + Subterfuge roll (difficulty 9) and a Willpower point. Similarly, a Pardoner could dispel the Effect of an Oblivion Curse with the use of Castigate.

**Roll:** Manipulation + Intimidation (Costs 1 Willpower)

#### Severity Effect (Path rating):

- A brief inconvenience (dropping an object, saying something stupid, stubbing a toe, etc.)
- A slip-up which results in lasting injury or embarrassment (breaking a Relic, stepping on glass barefooted, throwing up on the Japanese Prime Minister)
- A serious injury or illness, not incapacitating, but painful and inconvenient (broken limb, gunshot wound, spiritual leprosy)
- A lasting illness, not fatal, but debilitating (stroke, heart attack, Alzheimer's disease, sudden loss of all one's Fetters)
- Death or Oblivion, usually by some ghastly means (decapitation, impaling, mangling, torture, disease, consumption by Spectres, getting dragged into a Nihil by a beast of the Void)

#### Relation

- One person only
- One close relation or friend
- Two similar relations (male heirs, lovers, parents)
- All close living relations or friends
- All relations *and* friends!

6+: Relatives or friends for generations to come

**Rituals:** Although the practices involved in Cursing vary tremendously, the system Effects are fairly consistent. There are no special Rituals for this Path.

## Fetishism

Fetishism is the magical art of creating minor talismans. Some ghosthunting organizations, like the Benandanti, use it almost as an initiation Ritual. Others use it as a primary means of finding or fighting ghosts. Crafting magic from ingredients both eldritch and mundane, some fetishists spend much of their time closeted in a laboratory peering through foul smoke, containing minor explosions, and tracking down bizarre magical ingredients. Others are satisfied with the Rituals they have been taught and do not look for additional ones.

Minor talismans contain a single power only, which usually operates a few times under set circumstances. While their Effects aren't flashy, they do get results...usually. Most reflect their homemade origins. Crafting a talisman, even a minor one, calls for a certain degree of mundane craftsmanship, which some fetishists have and some...well...

Talisman creation should flow more from story concerns and good roleplaying than from die rolls. For those who want a system, assume that each different minor talisman requires a Ritual process which must be mastered before the craftwork begins. When the Ritual is purchased, the fetishist sets to work on the object itself. After the talisman's form is crafted (which may require a few Dexterity + Ability rolls), the talisman should be prepared in some special way according to the belief or style of the practitioner — inset with crystals, carved with runes, dipped into a Nihil.... Useful Abilities for these tasks include Crafts, Artistic Expression, Gunsmithing, Hunting, Traps, Alchemy, Herbalism, and Poisons, depending upon the purpose and the manufacture of the talisman.

After this, the fetishist sets *one* purpose for the item. This is the power it will have. Successful enchantment usually demands a day or two of preparation per talisman level. A simple level one item would require only two to four days of work, while a fifth-level talisman would demand at least five. At the end of this time, the fetishist makes an Intelligence + Hedge roll (difficulty is the talisman's level + 4). A point of Willpower spent during final creation infuses his might into the talisman.

A fetishist can never create a talisman more powerful than his Fetishism level. If he has four dots in Fetishism, he can only craft talismans of four dots or less in power. Once created, a minor talisman will work within some specified framework — i.e., when the moon is waning, when a blind man coughs, when a hooded Spectre appears, etc. These conditions should be colorful and very specific, tied to the purpose of the fetishist, not to general utility. Such particulars should be described during the creation process and must be adhered to. The player must decide what single Effect the talisman contains. She then details her character's research and development process. A simple "I create a level five talisman that makes me invisible to ghosts" will not suffice! Both player and Storyteller should check the prospective talisman to make sure that it fits the general guidelines offered below. After a period of story-defined time (anywhere from a few days to a year or more), the

player attempts an Intelligence + Occult roll, difficulty 9. Success means the fetishist has discovered the secret of Fetishism and can proceed as described above.

Botching a creation roll can be a bad thing. Many a fetishist has disappeared in a sudden conflagration caused by something as prosaic as an untimely sneeze or a misread passage. Obviously, Fetishism is not a quick and easy art!

The vast majority of minor talismans will only work a certain number of times (usually based on the number of successes rolled) and will be useless, if decorative, thereafter. Some Rituals, however, provide for extended utility, as long as the talisman's "power supply" is boosted now and again. Benandanti fennel swords, for instance, can work up to a year without replenishment, but thereafter must be dipped in a Nihil at every new moon. If they are not, they must be reforged (the Benandante can reuse the iron, however).

Minor talismans vary tremendously, from the bones that allow one to speak to one's ancestors to the crystal ball that can see into the Shadowlands. Such talismans can be used by anyone, although those bound to the fetishist in some way (her ancestral bone is the finger she cut off, his caul is forged into the sword) can be used as talismans only with significantly increased difficulty (usually depending upon how tightly the talisman is bound to the fetishist). For every Health level injury sustained by the fetishist during the creation process, persons other than the fetishist would have a +1 difficulty to use the talisman. For instance, if Jocelyn cut off her index finger (Health Level: Injured) to use as a talisman with which to speak to her dead mother, others could use her finger as a talisman at +3 difficulty.

**Roll:** Intelligence + Occult (Costs 1 Willpower)

#### Effects and Sample Talismans:

- A small object with tight restrictions and a limited power, perhaps a brief addition to an Attribute or Ability. Examples:

- A colored candle that grants its user a one-time favor after it is burned (two points of Resources, Allies, or Influence, depending on the color of the candle). The Background works once to provide a favor, then fades. Each success creates one candle.

- A handful of grave dust that enables the user to sleep soundly. He will wake immediately if someone approaches him with hostile intent.

- A more potent version of a level one talisman (with an additional die or two of Effect), or one that is more noticeably magical.

- A handful of bullets (one per success) that do two additional dice of damage when fired from a specially prepared gun.

- A pair of gloves that allow the wearer's hands to interact with the Underworld. She could hold a Relic, punch a wraith, be bitten by a barghest, etc. without having to enter the Underworld entirely.

- The item performs some obviously unusual function. Witnesses who know anything about magic will sense it being used. Clueless folks will be confused.

— A ruby flower that drains a Corpus level from any ghost it touches. Each time it does so, one of its petals cracks off. The fourth time, it crumbles into ruby dust.

— A pair of earrings that make the wearer appear beautiful...or handsome (three points of Appearance that last for one scene per success).

•••• With a talisman of this caliber, the user can perform fairly advanced magical feats, albeit with some restrictions. If these limits are ignored, the magic is ineffective.

— Bones which allow the user to contact the person they came from. Note that this is not always successful! If it is, however, the user can ask one question per creation success. Whether or not the ghost answers accurately is the ghost's prerogative, but it will answer if it can. These bones work only three times, then crumble to dust.

— A knife which can become insubstantial on command and can be wielded on the spiritual plane. It inflicts Strength + 3 dice of damage and can be thrown. The blade must first be drawn in hot anger and washed afterward in ectoplasm. Works once per success.

••••• Items this potent are rare and unpredictable. They often fail in places that are rife with skepticism concerning occult matters. Nevertheless, they work some wonder that obviously defies the seeming order of things.

— A lyre that summons the spirits of the dead when anyone (regardless of musical talent) thrums its strings. When they appear, all are moved to weep from the beauty of the melody being played. An elegy to Eurydice must be sung before the lyre will play. Each time it is played, a string breaks; when they are all broken, it is no longer a talisman.

— A tinderbox that can produce barrow-flame in the Underworld as long as there is tinder in the box.

### Ephemera

This Path allows a medium to reach through the Shroud and into the Underworld to contact the ephemeral Restless. Those who have passed into Transcendence or Oblivion cannot be reached in this manner. Many ghosthunters cannot know whether the person they are trying to contact has passed beyond or has remained in spiritual limbo as a wraith (or worse). A channeler can only try her best and see what happens.

The nature of the spirits contacted depends upon the Rituals the medium knows. Most ghosthunters only know those Rituals that allow them to contact the Shadowlands, but there are other, more obscure Rituals that open up the realms of nature spirits or malevolent spirits only tangentially related to Spectres. Note that even the channeler herself might not realize which spirits she deals with; at least two dots of Enigmas are required to know the difference. Amateur mediums frequently get into trouble this way, opening themselves to Spectres, Doppelgangers, and other mysterious Underworld entities.

Mediums open themselves up as spirit channels. Spirits, however, have minds of their own. If they have some

reason to mislead, possess, or abuse the channel, they may try to do so. Offering oneself up as a temporary Consort for Puppetry is not a risk-free behavior.

Thankfully, channels have some defensive Rituals to help them out if the spirits are unruly. Wise mediums are versed in the practices of Warding and Forbiddance (*Wraith*, pp. 234-235). Each of these counts as a level one Ritual and has the following system effects:

- Warding protects an area from ghostly intrusion. By using some precautionary charm (an intricate chant, prayer, painted sigils, iron nails, sprinkled salt, smudging with incense), spending a point of Willpower, and rolling same vs. difficulty 7, the medium can block wraiths from entering an area for one week per success.

- Forbiddance immediately drives wraiths from an area. By rolling successfully (channel's Willpower vs. difficulty 7), the medium can push a ghost from her immediate area. A willful wraith can oppose this Ritual by spending one of its Willpower points per success, but must otherwise flee until the medium has left.

- Note that channels often have high Willpower scores, making their chances for success even greater than an average mortal's.

Diplomacy in the form of persuasion tends to be more effective than force. To establish contact, the medium rolls her Charisma + Enigmas while calling out to the spirits in the area. A number of helpers (see "Teamwork") can lower the initial difficulty, as can a Fetter or Haunt. Locating her quarry usually requires an extended roll (see below). Once some communication begins, the channel states her case, hoping to win over the spirit to whatever purpose she might have. The details of this interaction play out like any normal conversation, but ought to be a hell of a lot weirder. The uncanny nature of this Path should be obvious.

It is not easy to find a particular spirit. To do so, the player must make an extended roll of as many successes as the Storyteller sees fit. Contacting your brother in the city where he died last year would demand less work than finding a Colombian bishop killed in the 1970s. The Storyteller should decide whether or not the ghost has passed beyond mortal reach, though he should keep the truth a secret from the players. An ill-intentioned spirit might masquerade as the ghost the medium wanted to meet, and this could cause all kinds of fun. Also note that, even if you do contact the target spirit, there is no guarantee that you will understand him. If, for instance, Preston the Channeler contacts that Colombian bishop, does he speak Spanish? Or can the wraith speak English? Or some other language that they both share?

Unlike other Paths, the difficulty of penetrating the Shroud goes down with each level, while your ability increases. A channeler with one dot in Ephemera works against difficulty 9 and can communicate only with human wraiths (and then only if they wish to be spoken to). This goes down by one step per dot, to a final difficulty of 5, but cannot go lower

than 3. As a medium's skills grow, she can speak with natural spirits (if she is taught to do so), see into the Shadowlands (but not pass through), and seek out specific wraiths.

### A Word on Summoning Ghosts

It is a difficult and dangerous task to force ghosts to appear. Those practitioners who do usually Ward themselves first and use a combination of Ephemera and Spirit Control (see below) to direct the proceedings. To accomplish this, after a long series of recitations, entreaties, and preparations, the practitioner rolls his Charisma + Occult with the usual difficulty. He must accumulate twice as many successes as his target's (permanent) Willpower rating with one roll per hour. The range of the compulsion is one mile per level of the character's Ephemera Path rating, i.e. a Path level three Summoning has a reach of three miles. Note that this can be horizontal or vertical: ordinarily, a practitioner Summons a ghost within a roughly horizontal three-mile radius of him in the Shadowlands. If, however, the practitioner is trying to summon a Spectre from the pits of the Labyrinth, he can risk a vertical Summons. There is, of course, no guarantee that the Spectre won't disorporate once it appears, as it may not have Fetters (the practice of Summoning unFettered Spectres is sometimes sponsored by concerned Ferrymen who have dealings with organizations or individuals capable of such magic). Once the ghost is Summoned, the first such being within the area of enchantment will be compelled to appear before the practitioner as rapidly as possible. Obviously, it is very difficult to perform a vertical Summons without accidentally catching a wraith. Moreover, Summoning a *particular* ghost increases the starting difficulty of the Summoning by 3 (although the Storyteller should modify this number as needed), and requires three times as many successes as the target's permanent Willpower per hour.

This magic does not instantly conjure a ghost out of thin air. The Summoned one will come at her own speed. If a ghost isn't within range, the practitioner may have to continue until he finds one. For each Willpower point spent, he may add another mile to the range. This is a dangerous tactic, particularly in vertical application, because if it works, who knows what will crawl out of the echoing depths of Malfean pits....

A number of Traits are especially appropriate to medium characters. Enigmas and at least one Hunter Knowledge are essentially required. Occult, Subterfuge, Awareness, Spiritual Awareness, and Intimidation are also very helpful.

**Roll:** Charisma + Occult (No Willpower cost except for Rituals above)

**Effects:**

- You can feel the spirits moving and even get their attention with a successful roll. What they do is up to them. This is a dangerous but necessary phase in a medium's Path.

- You can make distinctions between spirits you summon and can call specific ones if you know how. If things get out of hand, you can try to dismiss what you have called.

- When you speak, something always comes. With luck, you can address it, befriend it, or dismiss it. If you want to address a particular spirit personally, you can try at this level.

- You can pierce the Shroud and actually see and hear those ephemera around you. Most spirits respect you for your insight and ability. Some will even come when you don't call...

- The spirits of the Restless know your name and often come to you when you call. You can hurt those who displease you and dismiss those who offend you.

**Rituals:**

**Level One:** Open to the Unknown (free Ritual), Call Ghost, Ward, Forbiddance

**Level Two:** See Ghost, Seal, Banishment

**Level Three:** Gossip (allows the medium to "spread the word" around her chosen contacts)

**Level Four:** Grasp (medium becomes a Fetter for a chosen wraith for seven days), Deny the Shroud (allows medium to see through the Shroud)

**Level Five:** Distant Call (Medium can attempt to speak briefly to one who has passed on to some afterlife or punishment. This works within the Storyteller's discretion, but remember that even wraiths are not supposed to know what happens after Transcendence or Oblivion. Optionally, when successful, this could merely be contacting wraiths in hell-like or heavenlike places, not the Real Things.)

### Spirit Control

The most dangerous sort of Hedge Magic, ghosthunters often combine this Path with the Path of Ephemera in order to Summon and Bind ghosts. It is particularly popular with those ghosthunters who cannot naturally walk through the Shroud — why go there when you can bring 'em here?

The Spirit Control Path Rituals guard against ghosts or press them into service. It is a complicated Path, loaded with precautions and Rituals, and even under the best of



circumstances, it often creates lifelong (or longer) enemies. Of course, Spirit Control Rituals are extremely difficult to perform; because of this difficulty, it is impossible to begin play with the ability to use this Path against ghosts (i.e., being able to perform level 5 Rituals), unless the Storyteller agrees to allow it. However, players can work towards this goal, the attainment of this knowledge being perhaps more enjoyable because of the effort it requires.

As with any other form of Hedge Magic, there are multitudes of Summoning styles that ghosthunters may use (depending upon their culture or their organization), from simple pagan appeals to the creatures of the Goddess to elaborate medieval rituals, aboriginal soul-snarlings and modern black magic compulsions. Few are designed with politeness in mind. While some are enacted after a contract is made by some other means, summonings usually order a being to appear, mystically bind him when he does, and keep him at arm's length until he does what you want him to do. The style of magic and outlook of the practitioner will have plenty to do with the Summoned ghost's (or other creature's) disposition — and his desire for revenge.

Most such Rituals require long preparations. Few practitioners would be foolish enough to compel anything, especially something powerful, to appear without first making sure their asses were covered. These protections require Rituals, a separate one for each different kind of being. After these Wards are laid, the Summoning begins. This too requires a specific Ritual; one cannot Ward against a demon then Summon a ghost. Finally, when the one called does arrive, a Binding may be laid to force some kind of service. A Minor Binding merely requires one task be performed before the Binding dissipates. A Major Binding compels servitude until some condition is met and usually creates an eternal grudge. No one, not even an animal, likes being forced into servitude.

Some practitioners prefer to use only Wards or Summonings to protect themselves or to call upon aid. Only a fool would dare to lay a Binding without protection, although some have tried. Dismissal Rituals offer the practitioner some sort of compromise. If the Ritual is successful, the Summoned being will leave in peace — for the moment, at least. The forms these Rituals take can range from dancing around a mound consecrated to Eubouleus to human sacrifice, bended-knee prayers or intricate circles which take days to engrave. Players and Storytellers should play such ceremonies to the dramatic hilt. The bare-bones systems for such actions might work as follows:

• **Warding:** The practitioner lays some sort of Ward (a pentacle, a triangle of salt, a libation of wine, etc.) and rolls Wits + Occult (difficulty is the Path's level + 4). The target of the Ward will have to spend one Willpower per the practitioner's success to enter the area protected. A Ward lasts for one scene per success. A fair but devious Storyteller

might make the Ward roll herself, leaving the practitioner to wonder whether or not his Ward will hold!

This Ritual will act as countermagic (one die per success) or reduce any incoming Arcanos by one dot of effect for every one of the practitioner's successes. Wards do not, however, restrict ranged physical attacks like gunfire (not usually a consideration with ghosts, but if they start throwing furniture it's good to know...).

• **Summoning:** Summonings work only on material beings, not on ghosts. Ghosthunters who wish to Summon ghosts must use the Path of Ephemera. To force them to perform a task, however, ghosthunters often use Minor and Major Bindings (discussed below).

• **Minor Binding:** Once the subject is present, the practitioner can try to compel her to service. A Minor Binding pits the practitioner's will against the Summoned ghost's. Because ghosts by their very nature are willful and passionate beings (that's what keeps them in this state), it is a risky and difficult proposition to force one into servitude. To effect a Minor Binding, the practitioner spends a Willpower point and performs his Ritual (Manipulation + Ritual). His target rolls her own Willpower (difficulty of practitioner's own). If she wins, the Binding has no effect. If she loses, she must perform one task for him before she is freed. This should be spelled out in as complete a form as possible. Rest assured that any Bound being will be looking for the way out.

• **Major Binding:** The system for Major Binding is the same as that for a Minor one, except that both parties extend their rolls to amass 10 successes. For each roll, each party spends a Willpower point; whoever reaches 10 first (and still has Willpower left over) wins. If the Summoned ghost loses, she is bound to the practitioner until some condition is met. This "contract" must be specified at once and can be anything from "Until my hair goes gray" to "when a Maelstrom next sweeps across your Necropolis," as long as it is a possible event (conceptions of "possible" can get pretty fluid, however).

If the practitioner loses, he is toast.

• **Dismissal:** If the wizard wants his subject to depart in peace, he performs another Ritual (involving some sort of thanks, a benediction and a request to depart, usually with a healthy bribe attached). A simple Wits + Ritual roll with normal difficulty "persuades" the Summoned ghost to leave without dropping a chair on his head. This does not prevent later animosities, but for now, the being will leave content. This will not work after a Major Binding has been attempted.

The Rituals above need not be performed together. Bindings or Wardings can be used on their own if the circumstances permit. Players and Storytellers should be flexible, dramatic, and fair when running such Summonings. This magic Path could stimulate either suspenseful storytelling or intense debate.

**Warding Rolls:** Wits + Ritual (No cost)

**Binding Rolls:** Manipulation + Ritual (Costs 1 Willpower)

**Dismissal Rolls:** Wits + Ritual (No cost)

**Effects:**

Note that the first level of Spirit Control that allows ghosthunters to affect real ghosts is level 5. Levels one through four work toward this end.

- This level's Rituals affect only small physical animals — rats, bats, birds, lizards, etc. The practitioner may Summon three of these per success (using the Summoning rules in "Ephemera" above). Most ghosthunters call this the "Guinea Pig" stage.

- The higher physical mammals (chimps, dolphins, cats, dogs, wolves, apes) may be Summoned and controlled at this Path level (using the Summoning rules from Ephemera). A practitioner may control two of these per success. OR, the practitioner may Summon lower spiritual animals — and these are rare — (ghostly rats, bats, cockroaches, etc.), three per success.

- Normal humans can be Summoned at this level. A practitioner attempting this should use some artifact of the individual he wants to command (a lock of hair, an item of clothing, etc.) in his Rituals for them to work. Only one can be commanded per success. OR, the practitioner may summon and control one higher spiritual mammal or barghest.

- Minor supernatural beings (ghouls, werewolves' Kinfolk, mages' familiars, etc.) can be brought forward and Warded. The limitations of normal humans apply. OR, the practitioner may Bind/Ward/Dismiss one Drone.

- Ghosts may be Bound, Warded, and Dismissed with these Rituals (they must be Summoned using the rules in "Ephemera," as they are not bound by physical laws). Only one individual can be so treated, and some bit of ectoplasm, a Fetter, or other items that once belonged to the ghost in question must be used. Also, major supernatural beings (vampires, werecreatures, mages, faeries, and some types of physical monsters) can be Summoned and Bound with these Rituals, although this also requires personal items or something connected with the creature in question to take effect. This is really dangerous territory; one blown roll and...

**Rituals:** Each different kind of subject, whether bird, wolf, or ghost, has a unique set of Rituals which must be purchased and used to have any effect. Warding, Summoning, Minor Binding, Major Binding, and Dismissal all require separate Rituals as well. Obviously, it takes some work to gain expertise in an area.

## Psychic Abilities

Psychic abilities are a mixed blessing. Unlike Hedge Magic practitioners, psychics rarely seek out their abilities. They come naturally, unexpectedly, shaking that person's world and forcing them to either hide their gift or suffer hell for it. In their earliest stages, Psychic Phenomena are inconvenient at best and terrifying at worst. Strange, sudden insights and frightening spasms of power push some psychics over the brink of sanity. The origins of such abilities are a matter of much debate among psychics. Some believe that everyone has these abilities, but that most do not discover them; others hold that they are granted to certain individuals by higher powers. Within this latter group are those who believe that spirits send messages to them via high-energy waves that reach their unconscious. Among these psychics, the debate continues as to whether these "spirits" are the knowing and loving souls of the dead, or non-human spirits who are helping humanity to improve itself. Whatever the source, however, the psychic can, through practice, refine her talent into the sixth sense that it was originally meant to be.

It's a rare psychic who has more than one Phenomenon. For the most part, these mental adepts have a single natural aptitude which can be trained but hardly diversified. There are no Paths for Psychic Phenomena, only the aptitudes themselves. With practice and luck, however, a ghosthunter with mental talent can delve further into the Shadowlands around her than she ever suspects.

All Psychic Phenomena below cost one point of Willpower to use.

### Clairvoyance

Clairvoyance is the ability to extend the senses far beyond their normal range and to see or hear things that are happening in other places. This power normally requires some focus, such as someone or something that the psychic knows is present in the area to be observed. Many clairvoyant specialties exist; Underworld clairvoyants, for example, team up with the ghosts of people with whom they once had relationships in order to solve a mystery or to learn more about the Underworld firsthand.

Psychic characters must roll Perception + Spiritual Alertness (difficulty 8) to project the senses into the Underworld (roll Perception + Alertness, difficulty 8 to project into the physical world). When projecting, the psychic can no longer see what is happening around her body, nor may she affect events that she witnesses. The psychic is merely an observer.

**Spiritual Roll:** Perception + Spiritual Alertness (Costs 2 Willpower)

**Physical Roll:** Perception + Alertness (Costs 1 Willpower)

### Effects:

• The psychic sees events in a hazy, dreamlike manner in any room in the building in which he is projecting. These visions are easily misinterpreted.

•• The clairvoyant can see events anywhere within a fifty mile radius and can sometimes hear them as well (3 successes), although the sounds are distorted.

••• The psychic can see and hear events anywhere within a 250 mile radius and even touch objects (3 successes), although they feel vague and amorphous.

•••• The clairvoyant can now see, hear, and touch anything within a 2,000 mile radius.

••••• The master clairvoyant who has reached this level can use all five senses on any object anywhere within the Shadowlands or the physical world.

### Telekinesis

Telekinesis allows the character to project her will and move objects with the power of thought. A roll of Wits + Athletics (difficulty 8) is required to use this power. If the psychic botches the roll, objects begin to fly randomly about. To first pick up an object, it must be within view. You need not see that item while holding it.

Picking up items in the Shadowlands poses a different kind of problem, particularly if you cannot see beyond the Shroud. Although it is unusual, some telekinetics also practice Clairvoyance to first see into the Underworld, then manipulate objects there. The difficulty for combined activity such as this is 9 (roll Perception + Spiritual Alertness, difficulty 8, then Wits + Athletics, difficulty 9). Once the object is located and grasped telekinetically, Clairvoyance can be dropped, although it is usually good to see where you place/throw things.

**Roll:** Wits + Athletics (Costs 1 Willpower for physical objects; 2 for spiritual)

### Effects:

• The psychic can levitate small objects in the same room (or in the same locale as he appears in the Shadowlands) with great difficulty. Physical gestures make this somewhat easier (e.g., throwing, lifting, etc.). If these are not possible, the difficulty rises by one.

•• The telekinetic can affect small objects, such as bending a spoon or levitating an obolus. Again, without gestures, the difficulty rises by one.

••• At this degree of proficiency, the psychic can handle an object in the next room and throw it around. Gesturing sharply in that direction helps. However, the psychic may only manipulate objects that require *half* his Intelligence (determined as if Intelligence replaced Strength) to lift.

•••• The telekinetic can lift items that require his full Intelligence and no longer needs to gesture. He can pick up any item within a 200 foot radius and can pick up more than one object by concentrating.

••••• The psychic can lift anything in sight which her Intelligence + 2 can handle. He can manipulate as many items as he has points of Dexterity.

### Telepathy

This ability allows a psychic to read minds. The telepath must roll Intelligence + Empathy against the target's Willpower to read its mind. The being whose thoughts are being read is unaware of the psychic's presence unless he botches the roll.

This talent is not always the most pleasant of Phenomena, as it often reveals the most perverse or ugliest thoughts of even the seemingly purest of people. Both player and Storyteller should make the most of the degradation and disgust this talent can evoke in a psychic. The darkest secrets in the World of Darkness can get *really* unpleasant.

**Roll:** Intelligence + Empathy (Costs 1 Willpower to access the thoughts of the living; 2 for the dead)

### Effects:

• The psychic can feel the current emotions and sense the mood of one target within view (again, many ghosthunting psychics pair this ability with Clairvoyance). Sometimes this is dangerous to telepaths specializing in wraiths, as they can get swept up in the passions of the Restless and lose themselves (roll the wraith's Passions vs. the telepath's Willpower — if the telepath loses, she may emerge from her trance days later wondering where the time went).

•• The telepath can read the surface thoughts of one target within view, receiving whatever they are thinking about at that moment.

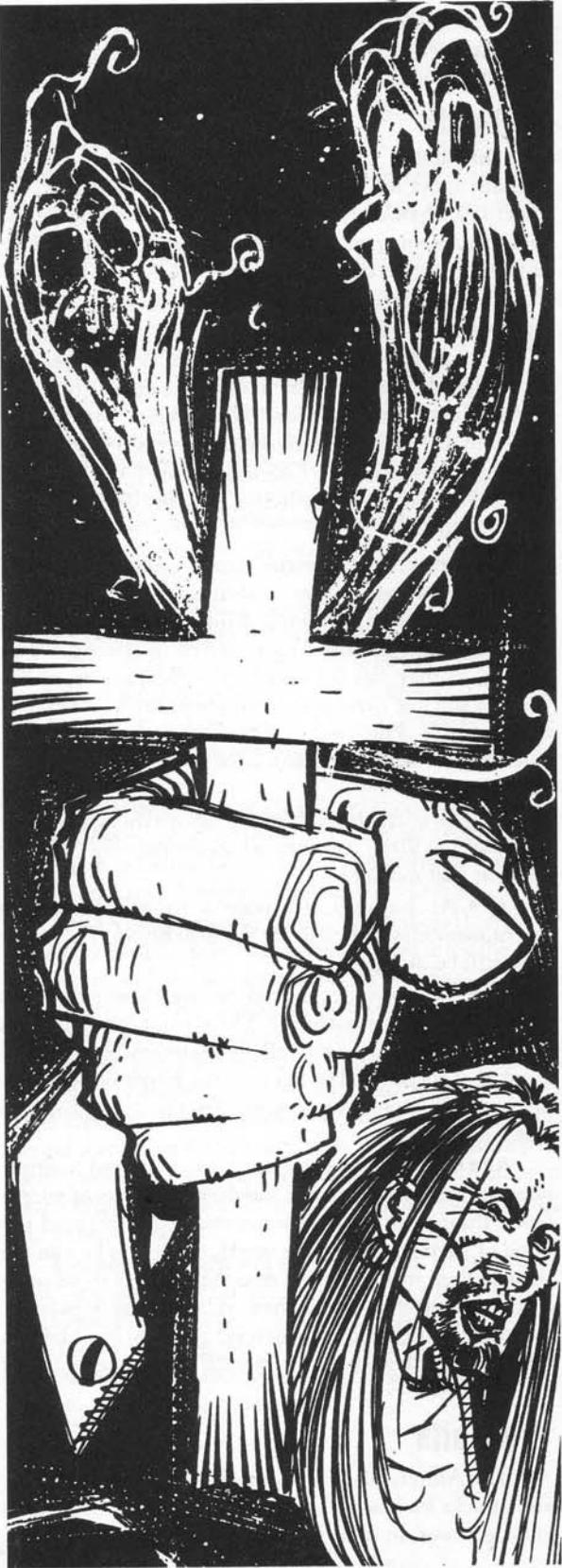
••• At this level, it is possible to read the target's recent memories and plans for the near future. The target must still be in sight.

•••• The psychic can read the target's deep thoughts and plans for the distant future. The amount of information received varies at the Storyteller's discretion, based on the number of successes. He can read the minds of people in other nearby rooms, but requires descriptions of them to "get a lock-on."

••••• This master telepath may now read multiple minds at once and discover the deepest secrets of people (even things that they have repressed). He can read the mind of someone across the world, so long as he can see them or their image, or even read the minds of those using psychic powers elsewhere in the world and the Shadowlands. Reaching into Stygia and beyond requires level 6+ (in other words, this should be beyond the scope of player characters!).

### True Faith

This Affinity allows a ghosthunter to turn aside Arcanos and attacks by hostile Spectres through her belief in an outside power, in some God or gods beyond human will.



Very few individuals have True Faith, especially nowadays. The most prominent ghosthunters known to possess it are the Sons of Tertullian and the Sect of St. James, the former having at least one point and the latter having at least two points of the Affinity.

Those who have True Faith usually wield holy symbols to perform such feats as exorcising possessing wraiths or warding off supernatural creatures such as vampires, whom they may consider evil. Some ghosthunters use specially prepared weapons and other items (such as the Sect of St. James' swords) against these foes. Individuals doing so must have a Faith rating equal to or greater than that of the item. For example, most Swords of St. James have a Faith rating of three, so only individuals with three or more points of True Faith can use one of these weapons. Also note that holy items may only be used to full effect by someone whose faith is similar to that which created the item. Thus, a Hari Krishna with a Faith of 4 cannot effectively wield a Sect member's holy sword — he can merely use it as a normal sword and without aggravated damage.

Obviously, items can be created using True Faith. This is done using the Fetishism rules above, except that at the end of the preparation time, the creator rolls Intelligence + his True Faith rating (difficulty the potential Talisman's level + 4). A point of Willpower must also be spent. A severe botch in this creation process causes the creator to lose a point of True Faith ("why didn't [insert deity of choice here] help me create this blade to be used against [his, her, its] enemies?"). Regaining this point should make an interesting motif for a story.

In game terms, True Faith allows the believer to use one die of countermagic for every dot of Faith he has. Ghosts must make a Willpower roll to even approach one with True Faith. The human character's rating is the difficulty of the roll. To progress in Faith, however, the character must follow the tenets of his chosen belief without fail. Faltering jeopardizes further gains, and continual doubt can erase the Numina completely.

Each dot of True Faith costs seven Freebie Points. Only roleplaying can reflect this Numina's vagaries. After character creation, the rating cannot be increased by spending experience, only by living it.

#### Faith Levels:

- Novice: You are very faithful, but still inexperienced.
- Practiced: Your faith has been tested in earnest one or two times.
- Competent: You are experienced, but your faith has only really been tested a half dozen times.
- Expert: External problems often test your faith, and you pass with flying colors.
- Master: You could have been Moses.

# Special Rituals



rganizations using Hedge Magic must perform Rituals to shape their mystical energies and spiritual power into the desired Effect. Members of other organizations also often have Rituals that rely on True Faith or Psychic Phenomena for power and involve the use of foci and ceremonies. Discussed below are some Rituals commonly used by members of the organizations described in previous chapters.

## Sons of Tertullian

### The Descent into Hell

Before Sons of Tertullian begin a ghosthunt, they perform a Ritual which augments their physical, mental, or, more importantly, spiritual power. This Ritual is known as the Descent into Hell, during which the hunter prays and fasts for three days straight. On the final night of the fast, his compatriots boost his fortitude with their own using this Ritual. Since the Sons of Tertullian share the same faith, they can work together to pool their resources:

First, the character must persuade fellow Tertullians to help him prepare (Charisma + Expression, with a difficulty of the Tertullian's Willpower — roll for each). Only those who know him personally will be inclined to help him at all; Preceptors probably won't give the character a second glance. Next, each Tertullian rolls his True Faith rating versus difficulty 7. They may pick the trait that they think needs boosting, or the character may attempt to persuade them to boost the attribute he thinks he needs (players should roleplay this out and should not mention the term "Attribute!"). For instance, if Father Joseph wanted to help Brother Tuck boost his Strength, the good Father would roll his Faith rating (3) against difficulty 7. He succeeds. Father Patrick does the same, but doesn't have enough faith in Tuck to succeed (however, he doesn't botch). For each successful assistant, Tuck lowers the difficulty of the final roll (True Faith, difficulty 7) by 1 to a minimum difficulty of 3. For instance, Tuck adds his True Faith rating 1 to his Strength 4 for a total of 5. He then subtracts Father Joseph's success from the difficulty ( $7-1=6$ ) and rolls against that. If he succeeds, he gains an extra point of Strength for every success until the end of the ghosthunt, or until he breaks his fast. If he fails, the only harm done is that Father Joseph loses a point of Strength until the ghosthunt is concluded. If anyone botches throughout the process, 2 is added to the petitioner's difficulty and the person who botches permanently loses a point of the Attribute the petitioner was rolling against (thus it is often difficult to convince others to help with this Ritual).

Tertullians helping the character may instead roll against their Faith ratings to boost the petitioner's Will-



power (a sort of spiritual "rally"): when it comes time for the petitioner to roll, he rolls his True Faith + half of his Willpower (round up). Every assistant's success subtracts one from the base difficulty of 7. Willpower is lost in the same manner as stated above.

**System:** Assistants roll Faith (vs. 7); petitioner rolls Faith + Attribute to be boosted (vs. 7 - assistants' successes or + assistants' botches). Note that this Ritual can only be performed once per ghosthunt.

### The Healing Touch

When the Sons of Tertullian have detained a person for exorcism, they typically perform a Ritual that is supposed to "soften" the victim's resistance to their probings and torture. First, the torturer shaves all the hair from and completely washes the victim's body, then slices some skin from the victim's scalp: roll the torturer's Manipulation + Intimidation, difficulty the victim's Willpower.

He then uses this skin to create a salve that he blesses and rubs onto their fingertips for use in the victim's exorcism: First, he slices up, bakes, and grinds the skin into dust before the victim's eyes. Then, mixing the powder with fennel, Old Man (wild Southernwood), and comfrey in a base of sour milk and cornstarch—a foul-smelling concoction by all accounts—the torturer blesses it (True Faith + Herbalism, difficulty 7). Every success against the victim's Willpower earlier subtracts from the difficulty of this roll.

When torturing the demons from a victim, the Sons keep their prepared fingertips somewhere on the victim's body at all times, as this "coaxes" the spirit from them. For every success concocting the salve, subtract a difficulty from the roll to exorcise the spirit.

## The Benandanti

### The Unhooding

For mortals born with cauls, a Benandanti Unhooding marks the beginning of an extraordinary life led halfway between the world of the living and the realms of the dead. An Unhooding is a complex Ritual usually performed by a *sapienza* related by blood to the infant being Unhooded. *Sapienze* who perform this Ritual are typically quite advanced in knowledge. In order to perform it, the *sapienza* must be present at birth or before the caul of the *novizio* dries out. He removes the caul and creates a Level 5 talisman from it (see "Fetishism" above), with the specific purpose of allowing the fledgling Benandante to use it to enter the Underworld via a Ritual known as Ekstasis (it also has other uses, such as forging the Fennel Sword, but these require their own Rituals, with the caul as a component)—only its owner (i.e., the fledgling Benandante) may use the caul as a talisman.

## Peering into the Underworld

By placing their cauls over their eyes and concentrating on seeing the Underworld, Benandanti can peer into the Shadowlands with a simple Willpower roll (difficulty 7). Called "Minor Ekstasis," this practice allows the Benandante to peer into the area of the Shadowlands where his physical body is, and no farther than he can ordinarily see. Furthermore, he does not derive the benefit of revivification from this practice as he does with full Ekstasis (see below).

### Ekstasis

In order to penetrate the Underworld, Benandanti must enter a sleeplike state known as Ekstasis. All Benandanti wishing to undertake this Ritual must first purchase at least one dot in Ephemera (see above). A Benandante enters Ekstasis first by assuming a restful position and meditating using his caul as a focus (Perception + Meditation, difficulty 8). He can only achieve Ekstasis by using his own caul (without it, Ekstasis is impossible). Further, the spiritual portal available to Benandanti through their cauls is available only from dusk until dawn. During the daylight hours, when the Underworld has least sway over the world of the living, Benandanti find Ekstasis impossible.

Once in the Underworld, the Benandante must immediately take a moment to orient himself (Wits + Alertness, difficulty 6) to the location of the entrance through the Shroud. If this point of entry is ever lost (for instance, if dawn catches the Benandante still in the Underworld, it disappears), the Benandante must go in search of a new one—a process that, even if successful, has taken some Benandanti days, months, years, even decades. While in the Underworld, a Benandante can be affected in the same ways a wraith can, with one exception: if his caul is ever destroyed while there, he can never return to the Sunlit Lands again.

To return to the Skinlands, the Benandante must find his point of entry again (Wits + Alertness, difficulty 5) and, while concentrating on reaching the living lands, stretch his birth caul over his eyes to escape the power of death (Perception + Meditation, difficulty 6). For convenience, some Benandanti have fashioned hoods with masks in which their birth cauls are sewn into the eye holes for just this purpose. Use of such masks is discouraged, however, for they attract the unwanted attention of Hierarchy wraiths who wish to keep the mysteries of the Underworld a secret.

Note that Ekstasis provides a mystical side benefit: when Benandanti return from it, they often feel revivified—for every hour they stay in the Underworld, they need to sleep two hours less that night (based on an eight-hour sleeping schedule). Thus, if a Benandante were in Ekstasis from midnight to 3 A.M., he would need to sleep six hours



less that night, and could catch up on his eight hours of sleep by sleeping from 3 A.M. to 5 A.M. If in Ekstasis for four hours, he would not need to sleep at all; beyond that, Benandanti derive no benefit.

### Forging the Fennel Sword

To help their *novizi* create fennel swords, the *sapienze* generally pass on the instructions recorded by the noted Benandante historian Giacomo Piccariello:

- Grow five pounds of fennel in soil mixed with a finely-ground scrap of your own birth caul. The fennel plot must be located in a Haunt (it may also be grown in a planter placed there).
- Harvest the fennel precisely at dawn at midsummer and immediately wrap it in your caul. Keep it chilled and out of the sunlight.
- From dawn to dusk, prepare yourself with meditation on mortality, the nature of sin, and victory over evil (roll Perception + Meditation, difficulty 6). An hour before sundown, return to the fennel plot and sprinkle a pound of your fennel sprigs about your Ekstasis circle to purify it.
- Fifteen minutes before dusk, call upon the spirit of a dead brother for aid (see Ephemera rules above).

- At dusk, lay the fennel, still wrapped in your birth caul, under your head and enter Ekstasis.

- Your guide will appear outside the Ekstasis circle. Take care, for other spirits may appear in his guise. Take up your caul and fennel and follow your guide to the Forge, which will be built upon a Nihil and guarded against Spectres.

- At the Forge, your guide will ask you a series of questions. Answer them truthfully, and the *ferro spettrale* (spirit-iron) will be yours. Answer falsely, and your guide will destroy your caul, stranding you in the Underworld, and make your spirit into a sword for other Benandanti to use.

- When given the *ferro spettrale*, immediately create the sword. A barrow-flame will be awaiting you. Heat the metal as your *sapienza* has instructed you and pour the fennel into the molten metal. Do not be concerned if the fennel burns; it is strengthening the sword. Fold, cut, and hammer the spectral fennel iron (make five Dexterity + Blacksmithing rolls, difficulty 5, and five Stamina + Blacksmithing rolls, difficulty 6; five successes must be accumulated in each, or the sword is flawed and the whole process, including the growing of a new plot of fennel, must



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begin again — obviously, too many failures, and you'll be out one caul).

• Fennel *ferro spettrale* cools very slowly. When the sword is ready to be cooled, go to the Chamber of Oblivion, located within the Forge, with the hot iron and dip the sword into the frigid Nihil there while naming it. (Use the "Fetishism" rules above to give the sword its power; all Benandanti swords are Level 5 or above talismans, as they do aggravated damage to Spectres and the spirits of the Void. Note, too, that unlike ordinary talismans, Benandanti swords are powered for a year from the date of the Forging. Thereafter, Benandanti must dip their fennel swords in a Nihil every new moon to repower it, or they must reforge the sword.) The forces of Oblivion are damaged by the sword, and dipping it into their realm may cause some dark thing to come crawling up out of the pit to deprive you of your prize. You may get a chance to use your new weapon, like it or not....

• Before you return to the Sunlit Lands, bring your sword to a location where there is a forge you can use in the living lands. When you emerge from Ekstasis, forge a second sword around the spirit sword so that you may carry it with you in the physical world (Strength + Blacksmithing, difficulty 5; this version of the sword is also made into a

talisman, Level 5, with the express purpose of exorcising possessing Spectres—during such a contest, the Benandante rolls Wits + Occult vs. the Spectre's Willpower. This power may not be used in the Underworld, though the sword can still cause aggravated damage to Spectres there.)

• One final word of advice: Never reveal the name of your sword to anyone, even your *sapienza*. If a creature of Oblivion hears it during the Cooling, be sure that the creature is killed before you leave, for, remember: part of your caul is bound into the weapon now. (There are stories of Malfeans learning the names of these swords. Some spirits have Rituals of their own in which they can use the sword's name to possess the Benandante or even pull him unwillingly into the Tempest.)

## The Orphic Circle

### The Orphic Oath of Secrecy

To keep tight reins on its membership, the Ebon Bench requires that all members of the Orphic Circle take a binding oath of secrecy. The Ebon Bench performs a Major Binding on the candidate (see "Spirit Control" above). This works just as most Major Bindings do, except that there is no contest of wills; the candidate allows herself to be bound. The terms of the oath are set out in Chapter 2.

# Daughters of Creusa

## The Creusan Mark

To create the Creusan Mark, the Daughters have created a Level 2 talisman that appears to be a white-hot brand (see “Fetishism” above). The brand pattern seems only to be an empty rectangle. When the brand is used on a Tertullian — stripped buck-naked, of course — it does not create any kind of mark on the flesh of the posterior (where it is usually placed), although it smarts quite a bit. However, it does create a spiritual “Kick Me” sign as detailed in Chapter 3. The only way for a Tertullian to break its power is by immersing the affliction in the font of Tertullian.

## The Bloo Moons

### The Spectral Scream

When in Ekstasis and traveling the Underworld, Bloo Moons can emit screams that attract Spectres. They do so by employing their skill in Ephemera (Hedge Magic). While screaming at the top of their lungs, the Bloo Moons summon Spectres — roll Charisma + Occult, difficulty 9 (the difficulty of penetrating through the Tempest to nearby Spectres). Usually, they scream and howl as a team: with every success the secondary members get in Ephemera + Occult, difficulty 7, subtracting one from the difficulty 9

that the primary member must roll against. The primary summoner’s Ephemera rating determines how far the message travels. Every success on the primary member’s roll attracts one Spectre. If the Bloo Moons are not near the Tempest, a Nihil may open up in the ground at their feet (50% chance). Failure means no Spectres arrive. A botch means another type of spirit heard them and was attracted — a barghest, a Ferryman, a Hierarchy wraith. These generally do not take kindly to attempts to summon Spectres into the Shadowlands. Plus, some of the Bloo Moons have an aura of Oblivion about them that barghests attack.

## The Pinball Wizards

When the Wizards trap spirits in their machines, players should have their characters hold a seance and use the Ephemera rules above to summon wraiths (these rules will only summon Artificers who know how to travel the electron highway). Activating the Ectoplasmic Rerouter, characters then attempt a Major Binding (see rules in “Spirit Control” above), which affixes the spirit to the machinery in which it is trapped. Because of the Major Binding, the Wizards may move spirits from one piece of machinery to another, but every time they do so, they must roll Manipulation + Occult vs. the trapped wraith’s Willpower (which seems to grow stronger the longer it remains trapped). To purge a wraith from a piece of machinery, Wizards use the rules for Dismissal (Spirit Control).



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# Chapter Four: Ghosthunting Chronicles

*The answer to life is...well, hell if I know.*

—E. G.



hy does a character seek out ghosts? What can she discover about them, about the universe she lives in, and about herself by doing so? The type of chronicle a Storyteller runs can decide the answers to these questions. Ghosthunting chronicles explore a variety of motifs, whether they represent dramatic styles, literary themes, or personal or group motivations for seeking out ghosts. Story concepts such as those outlined below give the characters a direction to pursue and help the chronicle work thematically.

When running a ghosthunting chronicle, Storytellers should strive to maintain a brooding atmosphere and an air of mystery. While ghosthunters often know more about the occult than ordinary folk, they are still mortal and should remain largely ignorant of the mystical nature of the universe around them. Part of the bait that lures the Quick into exploration is the mystery of the afterlife; Storytellers should avoid revealing all of life's mysteries in one epiphanic episode.

By using descriptive details, Storytellers can create that sense of mystery and also allow characters — and players — time to reflect on their situation. This reflection is important because, without it, the chronicle may become emotionally empty. In real life, people react to their environment and have feelings about it. If a leering Spectre suddenly appears before Joe the ghosthunter in the middle of a dilapidated house in rural Louisiana, and tells him that he is Joe's father, Joe doesn't simply think to himself, "That's nice. I wonder where the nearest McDonald's is." He reacts. He wonders if he is "bad seed," if his family has been cursed, if he is destined to evil. He finds himself pondering whether he should put his "father" out of misery, or if by doing so he is playing into the hands of evil. For the rest of the week, he is testy if someone jokes about his bad habits, or he reacts angrily if someone suggests he should see a doctor about his alcoholism. Something is eating at him, and he should figure out what it is and how to solve the problem — not just the outer problem of whether or not that Spectre was his father, but also the inner one of what that means to Joe.

Some of the best chronicles are those in which the characters discover only a little accurate information, and then have time to reflect upon it in detail. Quickly moving from one huge revelation to the next diminishes the potential for drama inherent in ghosthunting chronicles. Storytellers should give characters a chance to explore the story's theme and should attempt to weave novelty into even the more mundane of occult revelations. Finding a happy balance between mortal ignorance and the vital impulse toward discovery means success.

This chapter contains some suggestions for story concepts. Storytellers should feel free to adapt these to their chronicles or create new ones.

## Forgiveness

*When I said goodbye to her at Heathrow, I did not know that I would be saying goodbye to her forever. After all, we had our lives before us. Joyce and I considered the trip a brief inconvenience, a small interruption in our daily schedule forced upon us by the necessity of earning our keep — a short business trip to the States, that was all. We had had an argument about her going; at the airport, I made her promise to return in time for little Estelle's piano recital that Saturday afternoon.*

*She missed it.*

*Now I am an old man — have been so since the awful news of the crash — and I am searching ever more intently for a way to let Joyce know that I love her, that Estelle loved her until she, too, died. I search because I believe that Joyce lives: the day of the crash, I swear to you I sensed the horrible intensity of the heat that killed my wife. And, ever since then, I have felt her presence. So I speak to her when I am alone at night, or during the day when no one is around, and I wonder if I am going insane. You see, presence is not enough. I need a reply...I need to hear that she forgives me and understands that I did everything I could to save Estelle from death. I need to know if Estelle is with her.*

*Now I have only a few pounds left to my name. I have tried religion, charity, and prayers, but they could not offer me Joyce's forgiveness. Meditation did me no good, nor did London's mediums, charlatans all. I have tried psychics and seances, crystal balls and Tarot cards, Ouija boards and planchettes — all useless. Now, in the winter of my life, I feel that I have but two choices remaining. I will either find someone who can truly teach me how to contact the dead, or I will do away with myself, hoping to meet Joyce and Estelle on the other side. The first is less risky, more preferable. I know of some people who claim to channel the spirits of the dead...I will try, too. The second option is simply practical — for what do I have left to live for? Extreme old age? More loneliness? Humiliation at the hands of uncaring young nurses? Volunteers barely tolerating my vituperative stream of babble? Unending days of spit, urine, defecation, cancerous stink? No — far better to die now and live sooner.*

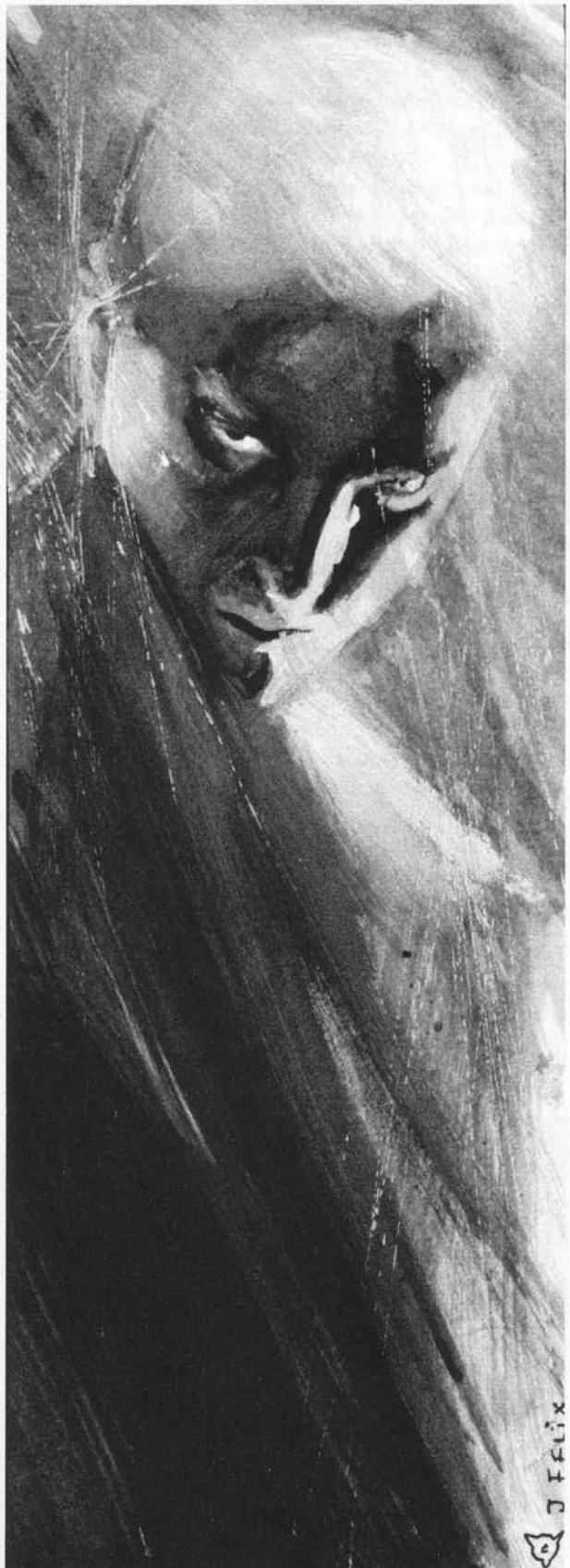
When the Quick pass away, they leave behind those they love. Sometimes that love does not fade over time; the

memories grow stronger, and with them comes guilt, regret for what might have been. Sometimes the need for the forgiveness of the vanished loved one overcomes the barriers between life and death itself. This need can lead the Quick to embark upon a search for answers, a way to contact their loved ones beyond the grave. And sometimes the loved one seeks the same....

The resolute quest for forgiveness makes for one of the most moving motifs in a chronicle. Ghosthunters thrive on such motives, which can spur them to hopelessly heroic or downright dastardly deeds as they hurdle the obstacles between them and the spirits of their loved ones. The question for players is how far their characters will go, and whether or not they simultaneously become the heroes and the villains in their pursuit of forgiveness. Does the player-character's loved one indeed still exist, and, if so, is she trying to contact the character with equal fervor? Will one of the players play the wraith? And what if the ghosthunter's resolution falters, whether from lack of faith or from the distraction of another love interest? What does that mean to the wraith whose memory begins to fade — what action will she take? How much guilt will the ghosthunter feel?

This sort of chronicle also works well for the motifs of unrequited and eternal love. Mortal characters continue to seek their loved ones, while the loved one has either passed on, accepting her new existence as a wraith, or else seeks the mortal in return. Chronicles such as these should stress the characters' passions: the longing, the loneliness, and the love, as well as the guilt, the uncertainty, the dejection, and the anger ("I love her so much; why does she not love me back?"). Remember the details, too: the difference between a meaningful chronicle and a lackluster one can be the use of details such as the loved one's amusing (or annoying) little habits, possessions, remembrances, memories of special holidays, and so forth.

If the Storyteller allows a mixed group (i.e., the *Quick and the Dead*), consider how to balance both mechanics and drama. One thing Storytellers might do is to boost mortals' Freebie Points to 21 to balance play. To balance the drama, they might wish to spend equal amounts of time in the Skinlands and the Shadowlands, alternating frequently between each (unresolved questions and hair-raising cliffhangers are always great dramatic tools). Alternately, Storytellers may allow players to create both mortal and wraith characters to play in each setting, obviating the need for dramatic juggling.



## Pogrom

Did you know that many restless spirits of the dead are living out their Hell-sentences here on earth? Yes, I say, here on earth. The Devil-spawn are not content with the evil they can perform in the Underworld; no, they must ooze up through the cracks to corrupt the souls of the living as well. At every opportunity, they appear to the living to twist their minds toward death and the lowly passions instead of lifting their eyes and their spirits up to the pure mind of God.

Yes, the Restless are responsible for the decline of belief that marks the modern age, for they infect the living with evil notions of what the afterlife is not. They tell tales of an Underworld where there is no God and there is no Devil — just restless spirits of the dead wandering about for eternity. Lies! All lies! One can expect no less from the sons and daughters of the Dark One. They undermine the very foundations of our faith.

What recourse do we have? I will tell you: we must fight these dark spirits until they are afraid to enter our world, until they learn the fear of God Himself. We must purify this old world of ours by learning how to destroy the Devil's minions.

Where there is fear, death follows. A large portion of those who seek out ghosts also seek to destroy them, for they are strange and therefore frightening; they do not mesh with the ghosthunters' worldviews, and therefore they shake the foundations of their faiths. Such faiths need not be of western origin; many different cultures fear the dead and seek to eradicate their presence from the world of the living.

The pogrom can form the basis for an entire chronicle, as characters seek out and follow up on reports of ghost sightings and supernatural occurrences. But there are plenty of other things for characters to discover or do over the course of a chronicle as well. They can learn how to destroy ghosts or invent new ways of doing so. They can learn how to perform exorcisms or placate the dead by sending them away with coveted gifts or promises. Generations of hunters could stalk one particular wraith decade after decade. Characters could recruit new members or, if they know how, attack the Restless in the Shadowlands themselves.

Pogrom chronicles also lend themselves to murder mysteries in which a ghost is involved. Since the characters may be likely to place the blame upon the supernatural creature, the Storyteller has some latitude in creating interesting plot twists. How do the characters explain a murdered child who has become a wraith? Is the child evil? If so, how was she corrupted and who did it? Does she deserve justice in the form of revenge? Should the hunters help a ghost destroy another ghost? What if the child is, indeed, corrupt, using the hunters to destroy a hated nemesis?

## Purification

The Sect of the Roses begs leave of the Circle to explain its grounds for separation. We are a devout group, no different from the members of the Circle in faith and bearing. Nevertheless, we find the Doctrine of Death unacceptable in its condemnation of the spirits

of dead humans who continue to wander the earth. Are our ancestors not to be revered? Are we not here to carry on their line and to be guided by their wisdom, which increases with every age? The spirits of the dead are not evil — generations of our neighbors, the wise men and women of Tibet, consult with them and are not the worse for it. How, then, can we condemn these spirits for wanting to continue to guide us?

We further believe that the spirits of the dead are not merely helpful, but are indeed holy, that they have the power to purify our souls. We therefore beg you not to condemn us, for we purify, not corrupt, ourselves by allowing our ancestors to enter our souls.

We have therefore seceded from the Circle, for we believe that if the spirits of the dead are still human and are not any more malevolent than are we, then we should seek their wisdom, for they are far older than us. My respected Elders, we do not wish to cause trouble for you. But we also must listen to our minds and our hearts.

Not all cultures find the spirits of the dead corrupting; rather, some see an opportunity for self-improvement as they honor the souls of their ancestors. Purification chronicles center around a group of characters who have such beliefs or who meet others who do. These characters search for opportunities in which to channel wraiths, believing that they can use this means to better themselves. Purification chronicles can involve the search for wraiths, the discovery of Rituals honoring (or attracting) the spirits of the dead, and the decisions characters must make about following any advice given to them while channeling. This type of chronicle is also an opportunity for characters to travel to unusual locations where such purification rites are typically conducted or can be learned. Another option Storytellers have is to transform a Pogrom chronicle into a Purification chronicle, in which characters come to believe that they can benefit spiritually from the spirits of the dead.

## Revenge

He stood before the group of already half-dead men — which included my husband — drew his officer's pistol, the badge of his "honor," and aimed. He hardly needed to. His targets were humiliated, broken prisoners. They stood clustered near the hot brick wall of the factory building, the glorious sun beaming down upon them, the sky shining blue overhead. Their shoulders were hunched over, their heads hanging, their bodies frail from starvation.

The gun shot rang out, echoing like the solitary death beat of a bass drum. The man next to my husband crumpled. I wanted to scream — so helpless I was behind the barbed wire fence that separated our husbands and sons from us. But if I screamed, I would die, too.

The Nazi strolled past the men who stood waiting for their deaths, as if strolling through the sunny countryside. He made a careless gesture with his hand and another man crumpled to the ground. The prisoners did not flinch as the man's head left marks on their clothing and emaciated hands, and his blood crept across the worn soles of the shoes they were fortunate to have.



One by one, that Nazi murdered every one of those men. After the first, I was transfixed with horror. My husband, my love, stood there like a sheep at the slaughterhouse, waiting for the bullet to rip away his brain. He stood helplessly while the other Jews fell around him. And finally it was his turn. No different than the rest, he, too, crumpled to the ground, and left me without hope.

But I did have one hope remaining to me: that I could find the Nazi who had destroyed our lives and be the cause of his ruin. I am old now and have been searching for years for the executioner; my search has at last paid off. I have come too late to deal death to the Nazi, but perhaps I can deal far worse. My only purpose now is to avenge my husband and myself—and, in a sense, all of my people whose lives were destroyed by racism and genocide.

Whether in life or death, some ghosts have given the Quick reason to hunt them down, intent either to destroy them or to make them suffer. Revenge is a strong primary motivation upon which to base a chronicle, drawing characters along as if they had swallowed baited hook. Revenge chronicles can be straightforward pursuits of justice (as determined by the victim), or they can be examinations of the nature of revenge. The latter type of chronicle explores the nebulous region between vengeance and corruption, in which characters must take a good look at what they are doing to determine whether or not they have become what they most hate. Some characters may not believe that they themselves have become the victimizers—which may or may not be true depending upon circumstance—but this kind of chronicle gives them room to explore how far they *could* go before this transformation were to occur.

Revenge chronicles need not focus only on the moment of revenge itself, but also upon the decision to avenge oneself, the preparation involved (sometimes years in the coming), and the type of vengeance that would satisfy the character's urge for "eye for an eye" justice. Wreaking vengeance upon the Dead is a difficult task, one obviously requiring much preparation, both in terms of necessary occult knowledge and psychological fortification. This preparation alone can become the subject of an entire chronicle.

### Running the Fog

Storytellers running ghosthunting chronicles may wish players to use the Fog chart in *Wraith* (p. 205) as a guideline for purchasing characters' Willpower. It won't do, for instance, for a well-known Creusan Daughter confronted by an angry wraith to run away frightened, or for an experienced Orphic to wet his loin cloth. If points are at an absolute premium, Storytellers may allow players to take extra Flaws if the points go toward Willpower.

## Death Wish

Just because I am a psychologist does not mean that I am immune to that uniquely human malady commonly known as a "death wish." I find it singularly thrilling to wager my existence on random or unpredictable occurrences, particularly when the nature of the bet centers upon the already-dead. What will become of me if I allow the dead to enter my mind or if I invade the minds of the dead? Do I lose my self? Do I become nothingness? Can I bring myself back if I enter a world without life, without that spark of vitality that urges us to create and to be? Does contact with the dead slowly submerge my subconscious in the metaphorical equivalent of the River Lethe?

What is death like? Those who explore this issue—truly explore it—have somehow managed to overcome the atavistic instinct of self-preservation that taught us as a species how to survive in an indifferent world. Chronicles exploring this theme should also explore precisely what a "death wish" is. This term describes not only a desire for death, but rather a host of other desires that use the fear of death as a measurement of achievement. A death wish, for instance, can be a desire for ego-gratification achieved only by overcoming death. Chronicles can explore the nature of this "victory over death"—whether or not, for instance, it is a self-deception. If people were truly capable of overcoming death, then would there be a need for parachutes or bungee cords or safety nets? Is what appears to be a "death wish" simply a mechanism for reassuring the mind that it is capable of withstanding high degrees of uncertainty and the unknown?

In a Death Wish chronicle, characters find themselves voluntarily performing risky acts involving wraiths or Spectres (or other beings of the Underworld) and examining their motives for doing so. (It goes without saying that the players themselves should not perform any such acts! Roleplaying is a positive act of creative imagination and self-exploration, NOT an outlet for self-destructive behavior.) Characters may find that they love life too much to lose it, or they may find that life is not what they value, but rather the continued existence of the self independent of physical manifestation. Characters may also explore other themes within the death wish motif, such as the need for excitement, the effects of boredom or loneliness upon the psyche, the need to be viewed as unique (another motivation for risking death), and the boundary between curiosity and self-destructiveness.

### Altruism

The restless one wavered on the stairs for a moment, staring at us hollowly as if seeing through us, then met my gaze. In his eyes I could see infinite sadness, a depth of forlorn passion beyond mortal understanding. Though he glowed with some inner light, a pulsing blue radiance that spoke of an otherworldly vitality, his face expressed only the loneliness of death. In that moment, I knew that he wanted us to usher him to the world beyond the next. His was a restless spirit mutely crying for peace, a peace that only we Benandanti could deliver him.

Some mortal minds hold only contempt and fear for the spirits of the dead, while others find them pathetic creatures in need of mercy. This latter group often believes it the duty of mortals to help the Restless move on, to break the fetters that chain them to the world of the living. Such beliefs often form the basis for an Altruism chronicle, in which characters help usher ghosts to Transcendence or Oblivion (although rarely do characters know such terms). Altruism may take other forms, as well. Characters may help certain ghosts attain their goals (what those goals are is up to the Storyteller), or they can experiment on the spirits of the dead and dying in an attempt to find a way to force human spirits beyond the Underworld.

Whatever the outward events of the Altruism chronicle, it is often a good idea to explore the inward motivations of such impulses, as well. What lies behind a character's altruism? Is it an inner need for self-forgiveness? A desire for group acceptance? The wish for ego-gratification, to appear to oneself as magnanimous? Curiosity about the character's fate after death? Deep-seated sadism masked as empathy? A truly heart-felt empathy for other creatures, living or dead? Or some combination of these? The Quick are complex psychological beings, and ghoshtuners often more complex than most. Storytellers should take advantage of the inward nature of an Altruism chronicle to explore the psyches of the characters involved.

## Fame

"Yes, Geraldo, I do believe ghosts exist. What many people fail to realize is that belief is the key to seeing, not the other way around. And, no, that doesn't mean I imagine ghosts into existence. They exist whether I like it or not. It's just that I can't see them if I don't believe in them."

"I'm a professional ghoshtunner — that means I have to be realistic about what I do or people won't give me any credibility. The fact that I'm here on your show tells me that I've come farther than other ghoshtuners in finding the truth. My goal now is to prove to you that my profession is a real one, that ghosts do exist."

Why risk taking your occult knowledge to the public? After all, there are many unbelievers, and you will doubtless suffer ridicule and scorn. Well, one simple reason is the desire for fame. To live in the public eye, to be seen as unique, to be rich, to be admired, to be envied...to be famous. Not many ghoshtuners can achieve these goals; it takes a very charismatic, witty, and persuasive hunter to overcome the skepticism of the scientific age. Most hunters concentrate on obtaining knowledge, not presenting it to the world, and when they are called upon to reveal what they know, they often come across as eccentric oddballs, humorous misfits, or despicable glory seekers. Oftentimes this perception is accurate.

Fame chronicles concentrate on the character's objective of achieving fame, or on the nature of fame once that goal is reached. Characters may encounter difficulties in their pursuit of ghosts because the media is watching them or because dissidents are purposefully giving them trouble. Like many rock bands, they may have "creative differences" once in the

limelight. Their egos may threaten to overwhelm them, or they may draw unwanted attention from the spiritual sector.

Fame chronicles may also explore the characters' rise to fame or their fall from glory. How do the characters gain credibility in the eyes of the public — or do they? Does fame have to do with credibility or fad? To the public, they may be just another toy, an amusement and a distraction from the humdrum realities of ordinary life. And what happens if the media exposes the characters as frauds? Whether or not they are, in fact, frauds, the experience should be a harrowing one for the now-pampered hunters. It may also be psychologically rejuvenating, allowing for a return to the simple days of lonely ghoshtuning without glamour or glitz, and providing both an excuse to apologize to other characters for behaving selfishly and an opportunity to reestablish waning friendships.

## Escape

*I am writing this journal in order to keep myself from falling asleep. I have tried drugs, meditation, and electroshock, but I fear that this will be my last night of consciousness and perhaps even life, for my eyes are closing on me.*

*The others have left me. Knowing the danger, they still could not resist the mortal necessity of sleep. To sleep is to dream, and the Spectres have found us there in that other dream-world. If I should sleep now, I fear that, like my companions, I shall never again awaken.*

Ghoshtuners do not always use offensive tactics; often, they find themselves placed on the defensive, forced to protect themselves, their loved ones, and sometimes complete strangers or even those they dislike, from various outside threats. The threat is usually supernatural, although danger may arise from any quarter, and often the most aggressive beings are the most vital — i.e., the living. An Escape chronicle focuses on the characters' attempt to escape, or to help others to escape, from a threat posed by the supernatural. Perhaps, at some time in their past, the characters made enemies with a powerful Spook or a malicious Sandman, and it has managed to track them down. Now they fear for their lives, or they are afraid to fall asleep. Perhaps the characters are helping a ghost to evade pursuit by the Sons of Tertullian, or are leading a group of ghoshtuning refugees with whose principles they disagree to a holy place of safety.

Whatever the plot element, an Escape chronicle should explore the nature of fear, self-preservation, and/or responsibility to others. Storytellers can test the characters' convictions in life or death situations and perhaps also the players' creative diplomacy skills if negotiation with hostile entities is required.

This story concept is best if used in conjunction with another. Players will soon get bored if their characters are always on the run, never able to direct the action themselves. More exciting is when players get involved in another story concept first. The hostile entity then appears and the characters are forced to run. When they feel that they have eluded their pursuers, they become involved in another plot line, but

the hunters appear again. Characters will never quite feel safe, but at the same time, they will feel at least somewhat self-directed. The interlude may also give them a chance to regroup and perhaps find a solution to the problem, so that they will not be forced to run forever.

## Power

Damn right I want to see results. I'm not paying you to sit around on your bloody arses all night. Those ghosts are valuable to us, understand? Do you understand the implications here? No, I mean really understand? If these ghosts exist, we're not going to parade them around like a carnival act! No public displays. Quite the opposite. What's that?...Yes, exactly: why should we risk our best ops to get into those rings of Middle Eastern hoodlums? Why risk them at the Pentagon? If we can learn to control these ghosts, we've essentially got the bloody Invisible Man....Yes, that's right. They can read secret files over Uncle Sam's shoulders without setting off alarms; they can locate nuclear sites in northern Korea without inciting the entire country to riot; they can sneak into Saddam's bloody tent and set off explosions for all I care. But the point is, Jonnie, they will make merry old England toastmaster of the nuclear club once again.

Ghosthunters do not always live up to the stereotype of skulking around in haunted houses in order to discover the meaning of life itself. After all, who cares about the meaning of life when you can shape your own fate? Those who seek power are wise to explore the uses of the Underworld, for there is phenomenal raw potential there. However, learning to harness that power is (or should be) a nigh-impossible task, something that no organized political body has yet managed. Even so, political interest in the occult is not unknown; Hitler's fascination with occult artifacts, for instance, has been well-documented.

Power chronicles can center around the characters' encounters with occult information used to boost political, financial, or other types of power. Characters may discover information about ghosts or the Underworld only to have it stolen and used by a political force. Or they may attempt to use it themselves to get a piece of the political pie. The financial world may have spies in the characters' midst, making use of their secrets, or the characters may seek to ensure their own political power in the afterlife by attempting to secure it now.

Whatever the ratio of the occult to power, characters in a Power chronicle should find opportunities to explore the ramifications of their knowledge on the political or financial systems they are about to unbalance. They should have a chance to ask themselves whether or not they want to get involved in political games — whether they think they can handle the high intrigue, the complex interrelationships, the potential corruptions of their schemes. And if they do not wish to get involved, what if it is too late? Can they undo the harm that has already been done?





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# Chapter 5: Creating Organizations



Mortal ghosthunters have quite a variety of needs and desires when it comes to finding ways to make their jobs easier, more profitable, or more exciting. Many of these can be fulfilled through membership in an organization. By their very nature, organizations offer the ghosthunter benefits that he or she could not secure alone: support, learning, weapons, accumulated experience — even atmosphere. As long as these advantages outweigh the organization's shortcomings, the ghosthunter will find her membership in the organization to be well worth her while. This chapter details the process of creating such organizations. The rules and suggestions found herein may

lend some insight into the development of the chronicle, as well as providing a means to create interesting backgrounds for the player characters (with the Storyteller's permission).

In some respects creating an organization is similar to creating a character — you must think about its goals and motives, its characteristic advantages and disadvantages, the extent of its Underworld knowledge, its location, and so on. You should also consider the details that distinguish individual organizations, such as internal structure, resources, enemies and entrance criteria.

If players wish to create an organization of their own, Storytellers may allow them to purchase the Background "Home Base" to establish a headquarters for it.

# Overview



The chart below gives you an overview of the organization creation process. Use it as a guideline for creating your own organizations or to modify those organizations described in this book.

## Step One: Power Level

- Choose Power Level: Is it a fledgling organization, or an established, efficient society?

## Step Two: Organization Concept

- Describe the Beginnings: Why does the organization hunt ghosts? What is its overall concept? How did it come to be in the first place?
- Detail its Structure: Who may join? Does it have a strict hierarchy, or is it a loose confederation of individuals? When does it meet? Are there internal factions?
- Determine Image: What is its general attitude? Has it earned a reputation?

## Step Three: Organization Aspects

- Choose Talents: What Talents, Skills or Knowledges does the organization require from its members? Does it train them?
- Determine Politics: What are the organization's internal politics? What are its leaders like? Are members loyal? Does the organization's reputation precede it? How cooperative is its social structure?
- Determine its Resources: What monies can it draw upon? Does it have access to laboratories or an occult library? Does it own any talismans? What contacts does it maintain?

## Step Four: Headquarters (Optional)

- Describe the Grounds: Where are its headquarters? Does the organization own its land? Is the base hidden? How big is it?
- Select Defenses: Is the base fortified? Are there guards, and what can they do? Is there a security system? Is the place Warded?
- Describe the Unusual: What is its ambience? Is there psychic or magical interference? Are there paranormal disturbances? Does it have special mystic advantages?

## Step One: Power Level

The first thing the Storyteller should do when creating an organization or when allowing players to create one is to determine how powerful an organization his chronicle can support. For instance, a Storyteller might not want members of the highly knowledgeable Arcanum milling about in a chronicle designed to introduce players to the concept of ghosts.

During organization creation, Storytellers may allocate a number of "creation points" to their players (or Storytellers can use these points as guidelines for balancing power levels within their chronicles). These points represent the resources, financial and otherwise, that the organization's founders were able to call on to form their group. Use of creation points is purely optional; they are simply there to provide guidelines for balancing play. The sidebar below lists the various power levels at which organizations operate.

Generally, the weaker organizations will have fewer members, will be more recently established, and will have headquarters located further away from Haunts. They will also be less familiar with other hunting organizations, and will have more limited research capacities and a looser internal structure. More powerful organizations tend to have been around longer, know more answers to the mysteries of the Underworld, and have greater access to resources and facilities.

### Costs

A group of beginning ghosthunting characters should start with no more than 20 creation points (*not each*) and preferably 10 to 15, unless the Storyteller is prepared to accommodate more powerful organizations. If players are going to create the organization, the Storyteller may wish to divide these points evenly between them so that they can all take part in the creation process.

Organizations do not automatically own a building in which to locate their headquarters; this must be purchased with the "Home Base" Background. Players may contribute points individually to a communal home base, or one player can pay the entire cost if he wishes. If players do not wish to purchase a home base, they can choose a public place in which to meet, or a player whose character already owns property can volunteer that property as a headquar-

### Power Levels

Weak organization: 5-10 creation points

Average organization: 11-20 creation points

Above average organization: 21-30 creation points

Strong organization: 31-40 creation points

Powerful organization: 41-50 creation points

Very powerful organization: 51+ creation points

ters. Players should be forewarned, however, that adventures can make headquarters unusable or cause recurring nuisances (such as hauntings). Moreover, enhancements to player character-owned buildings, such as Wards, must be purchased with "construction points."

Players (or the Storyteller) should begin by defining the organization without mechanics (Step Two). Once this is done, players should review and follow the procedures in Steps Three and Four, in which all aspects of a new organization are covered. Advantages are listed with the points required to buy the advantage, while disadvantages are listed with the points that they subtract from the cost of the organization. The Storyteller is advised to emphasize the disadvantages, making them worth the points they return. Total disadvantages should not be worth more than half of the total spent on advantages. Before play, Storytellers should always review the resulting organization.

## Step Two: Organization Concept

Begin by formulating a broad organization concept, something that sets the organization apart from other hunter groups, something that makes it unique and interesting. At this stage, don't go into a lot of detail. You'll have time for that later in the creation process — for now, just formulate an idea. When defining a concept, remember to try to stay within the Storyteller's point bounds.

### Beginnings

#### • Motivation

Why does the organization seek out ghosts? This book discusses four basic motivations: desire for purification, desire for knowledge, desire for power, and desire for thrills. If you have a motivation for your organization that is not covered here, feel free to use it!

**Purification:** These organizations are of two types, depending on whether or not they believe ghosts (wraiths, Spectres, or other unknown denizens of the Underworld) to be good or evil. Ghosthunters (used in the sense of those who seek ghosts' destruction) generally see ghosts as evil and a threat to humanity, and wish to purge them from the living world. Other groups may believe wraiths to be good, and seek to channel their power to cleanse their souls.

**Knowledge:** Some organizations seek out ghosts to gain knowledge about the universe, both outside and inside themselves, for learning's sake. Sometimes these groups evolve into power-seeking organizations.

**Power:** These groups wish to use their knowledge or control over ghosts to gain earthly or spiritual power, either while living or in the afterlife. For instance, an organization may wish to learn more about wraiths in order to set up comfortable and influential afterlives for themselves. Their primary goal is power, whether they view knowledge as the key or not.

**Thrills:** Some organizations exist to accommodate the desire for stimulation — and ghosthunting is an extremely unique source of stimulation. For more ideas on the motivations behind thrill-seeking, see Chapter Two, "The Thrill-Seekers."

Remember that an organization can and often does have more than one motivation. It all depends primarily upon how unified its members' general thinking is. If there are many factions, there will be many motivations. Still, try to choose just one or two in order to maintain a unified concept for your organization. While members' individual motivations for belonging may differ widely, an organization's motivations often depend largely upon purposes stated or written down somewhere, and these stated goals are typically resistant to change.

#### • Concept

Now that you have a motivation for your organization, further narrow down your original concept. If the group had a "gimmick," how would you describe it? How does its motivation mesh with it?

#### • Catalyst

Every organization has a history. At this point, you should formulate a short list of events that led to your organization's formation. Who founded it, how long ago, and why? What obstacles did he or she (or it) have to overcome? What did the founder discover in the process? How has the organization changed since it was founded? Have any of its original motivations changed? What keeps it together today?

### Structure

#### • Membership

Give some thought to who belongs to the organization. How many members does it have? What are its entrance criteria? Do you have to have a Ph.D. in physics, or just pay a membership fee and you're in? Is it cliquish, preferring only members of a certain social set, does it encourage everyone to join, or is it somewhere in between? If it does have entrance requirements, does it make sure members meet them — does it conduct background checks, require entrance exams, or demand other tests of character and competence? What happens if a character fails? Is it a highly secret organization, just unknown, or an institution in plain view of the public and the media? If it is secret, how does it maintain its secrecy during membership searches, investigations, and member conflicts (e.g., when a member disagrees with policy and wants to leave the organization)? Is it comprised solely of mortals? The point here is to sketch out the sort of people characters are likely to run into, as well as to outline the way in which the organization deals with its membership.

#### • Ranking System

Most organizations need leaders to direct the efforts of the membership, but the formality of the leadership differs

from organization to organization. For your own, determine first whether your organization is rigidly, flexibly, or loosely structured. Rigidly structured organizations have defined roles for members, including the leadership's role and powers, and how it is established (democratic vote, oligarchy, etc.). Members' roles are defined in the same manner. Organizations that are loosely structured tend to play events by ear; whoever is best suited for a job, including that of leadership, may find herself in that position. Many, although not all, smaller organizations have loose structures and are not as hierarchical in nature. Flexibly structured organizations fall somewhere in between these two extremes, with guidelines, not rules, governing the roles of leadership and membership.

You may also want to determine the ranking system for your organization: who is most respected and why? Who is least respected and why? Does it have to do with titles, achievements, or experience? The values of the organization as a whole largely determine its ranking system.

- **Council**

How does your organization's membership cohere — or does it? Usually, organizations achieve coherence by establishing set dates and/or places for meetings each year, month, or week. At this point, decide whether or not your organization meets, and, if so, when, where, and how. Do these "Councils" (conferences, conventions, gatherings, etc.) have a special name? Are they linked with special times or seasons of the year? What do they accomplish?

- **Factions**

Every organization has members who disagree with each other. Sometimes these disagreements lead to unresolvable conflicts. In such cases, organization leaders often prefer to allow the formation of factions, sects, schools, or other divisions, rather than to provoke a complete departure, thereby losing membership. Given this, factions also make for interesting roleplaying when conflicts arise over ideology, procedure, favoritism, or even who gets to use what equipment. At this stage, you should first determine whether or not your organization is large or widespread enough to support factions. If so, what characterizes these factions? Give them names, members, motivations, and relationships to the leadership of the central organization. Are they a result of geographical, political, ideological, social, or religious differences? Are they very hostile toward other factions within the organization, or do they have a working relationship? If hostile, consider how they manage conflict (Do they become violent? Do they seek to effect a political overthrow? and so forth).

## **Image**

- **Attitude**

Every organization has a "personality." It is important for you to establish the general attitude or "personality" of

the organization, which, in turn, determines the general attitude of its membership. To do so, use the Personality Archetypes listed in *Wraith*. For instance, is the organization something of a Bravo? Does it like bullying others, including ghosts? Or does it see itself as the savior of humanity and thus as morally superior (Martyr)? As always, if you think of an archetype not listed, feel free to use it. Pay particular attention to how the organization sees its role in relation to the Restless. This often helps determine its role in relation to the rest of humanity.

- **Status**

Sometimes organizations develop reputations among certain sets of people. If your organization is secret, it is unlikely to have a reputation, but if it is not, you may want to give it one. If you decide to do so, see "Merits and Flaws" below, as reputations can bestow certain benefits and disadvantages upon an organization, for which the organization should spend or receive points.

## **Step Three: Organizational Aspects**

Using creation points, choose your organization's advantages and disadvantages. Certain organizations train members, or have vast libraries of knowledge. Others have organized, beneficent leadership or an extremely loyal membership. These advantages are covered below. Disadvantages are listed, as well, making your organization more colorful and giving you additional points to spend on advantages. Recall that the total number of points gained from disadvantages should not be worth more than half of the total spent on advantages. It is *extremely* important that these rules be treated as a set of guidelines, and not a shopping list. Always buy things as according to what is likely, not simply because "we can get the points for it, and it'd be really useful."

### **Abilities**

Some groups only accept those with certain traits, skills, or lore. Others will train or tutor all members in a certain area. These requirements may result in an organization whose membership is comparably more powerful, as players can expect *all* members to have a certain ability. Some members could conceivably exceed the requirements, at the Storyteller's discretion. With formal training or instruction, the players will receive certain Abilities for free, without having to seek out mentors or purchase equipment. The Storyteller, as always, must keep an eye on game balance.

- **Talents**

Some organizations only accept candidates who have certain inborn traits or talents. If your organization has such requirements, choose one from the list below.

**Talent (+2/level):** Every level of ordinary talent required by the organization costs 2 points. For example, if all members of an organization must be convincing actors to

get in (Expression 3), the cost for that talent requirement would be 6 points. If members had to be good actors (Expression 2) and good teachers (Instruction 2), the total Talent cost for the organization would be ( $4 + 4 =$ ) 8.

**Supernatural Power (+7/level):** This advantage covers minor supernatural powers such as cauls, inborn psychic abilities, and so forth. Storytellers should note that most ghoshunters only rarely have minor powers, while major supernatural powers are out of the question. This advantage should cost 7 points per power level required. Remember that this value reflects the *minimum* requirements of the organization. For example, if everyone in the organization had to have at least one dot in telekinesis, the cost would be 7 points. If five dots in telekinesis were required, it would cost 35 points (quite out of the range of most starting player characters).

For less quantifiable powers such as those granted by Benandanti's cauls, Storytellers should estimate based on the power that the ability gives the group. Cauls, for instance, make it possible for players to enter the Underworld — but not without learning the Ritual Ekstasis. At the same time, the caul is an Achilles' Heel: if it's ever destroyed while the owner is in the Underworld, the owner is stuck there forever. The Storyteller should weigh the advantages and disadvantages of a power, and come up with a cost that she thinks fairly represents the advantage to the players. Suggested cost for cauls: 10 points.

- Skills

Organizations sometimes also require certain skills of members before they are allowed to join, or they train them in these skills. Either way, this requirement must be purchased using creation points.

**Skill (+2/level):** Every skill level required of an organization's membership costs two points. For instance, if all members must know how to use firearms (Firearms 1), the cost is 2 points. If all members must be master electricians (Repair 5), the cost is 10 points.

**Formal Training (+3/level):** The organization accepts promising members on the contingency that they are to be formally trained in a required skill. The organization trains initiates in this skill for free. This is particularly useful when characters need instruction in unusual skills in which the organization specializes (note, however, that the skill does not *have* to be unusual). For every skill level that instruction will achieve, the cost is 3 points.

- Knowledges

Some organizations may require its members to have certain knowledges, including Hunter Knowledges (see Book I). Like "Skills" above, these organizations may also teach their members this knowledge for free or make it available to those who want it. Players should note that the quality of Hunter Knowledge instruction is by no means guaranteed — teachers are often misinformed in such mystical matters. However, their teaching may contain a



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seed of truth that proves valuable to the organization's members and thus worth the cost of this advantage.

**Knowledge (+2/level):** The organization accepts only those who already have a broad base of knowledge in a certain category. Each level of knowledge required costs two points. A bunch of ghosthunting hackers might require new members to be able to design their own software (Computer 3) to be allowed into the "club," a requirement that would cost 6 points.

**Hunter Knowledges (+3/level):** The organization accepts only those who already have some understanding of the Underworld in the form of Hunter Knowledges. Each level of Hunter Knowledge costs three points. The Boston Chapter of the Arcanum, for instance, might require potential members to have a knowledge level of at least Denizens 1, for a cost of 3 points. If they also required History 2, the total cost would be 9 points.

**Formal Instruction (+3, +4/level):** Sometimes an organization will require formal instruction in an area of knowledge if it is a prerequisite for membership. The organization offers this instruction for free, and the training may be in either ordinary Knowledges or Hunter Knowledges (although different costs apply to each). The cost structure is as follows: for every Knowledge level that instruction achieves, the cost is 3 points; for every Hunter Knowledge level, the cost is 4 points. Thus, if the Arcanum instructed promising new members in both Investigation (one dot = three points) and Denizens (one dot = four points), the total cost would be 7 points.

## Politics

### • Internal Politics

Wherever two or more people convene, differences of opinion may arise. Because of this, organizations are well known for the difficulties that internal politicking causes. Listed below are some advantages and disadvantages that describe the internal politics of organizations. These are, like most advantages and disadvantages, optional.

**Scheming (-10):** The organization's members are always plotting behind each other's backs. They may have personal rivalries, secret hatreds, questions of honor or private agendas. It's hard to trust anyone, and the organization suffers for it.

**Strict Hierarchy (-10):** The organization has a strict internal structure, making it difficult to advance in position. Everything follows strict procedure, and the masses of "red tape" often limit or slow the organization's actions.

**Conflicting Loyalties (-5):** Many members have strong loyalties to a group (or groups) outside the organization, and often find their responsibilities in conflict.

**Disorganized (-5):** The members are very disorganized, and have trouble coming to any sort of agreement or unified plan. Leaders of projects or divisions seldom know



what other leaders are doing, and it would be difficult to gather all the divisions for a concerted effort on anything.

**Sects (-5):** There is at least one faction that does not agree with the rest of the organization, and its activities sometimes embarrass or endanger the organization itself.

**Highly Organized (+5):** Members are so organized that they can act as one in any situation. Meetings are regular. This does not mean that all members are totally loyal or that there are no internal rivalries or similar problems — simply that such conflicts are put aside when the need arises.

**Harmonious (+10):** Members share a deep respect and fondness for each other and for the organization as a whole.

#### • Leadership

This category measures the general hierarchy of the ghosthunting organization and how it affects the organization's workings. Bonuses are cumulative (if the organization is so fortunate...).

**Malign Leadership (-15):** The leadership is actively evil and may not be averse to using torture or murder as a means or an end.

**Foolish Leadership (-5):** The organization's leadership is unskilled, inept, or just plain stupid.

**Dictatorial Leadership (-5):** Members follow orders or else!

**Wise Leadership (+5):** The organization's leader is the best around. Through her leadership, the organization has achieved many successes. She needn't be nice, however....

**Benevolent Leadership (+10):** The leaders are just and kind, going out of their way for members and the local community.

#### • Loyalty

This category measures the general loyalty of the organization's membership. This advantage or disadvantage (depending upon what you take) is particularly relevant to secret organizations, although public groups can take them with some attention to plausibility. Remember that, even in a generally loyal group, there may be exceptions....

**Spies (-10):** There are traitors among you, leaking information to enemies of the organization.

**Disloyal (-5):** Members are forced to join and perform their tasks out of fear, or they have some other cause for disloyalty. They are ripe for becoming spies for the organization's enemies.

**Indifferent (0):** Members are generally loyal, but would not go out on a limb.

**Loyal (+5):** Members are notably loyal to the organization and can be counted on in tough situations.

**Committed (+10):** Members perform their duties with great zest, efficiency, and zeal. They enjoy their work,

and there is always good cheer to be found. The organization is an attractive place for characters.

**Fanatical (+15):** Members willingly give their lives for the organization's ideals. This fanaticism reflects on their willingness to help each other to achieve the organization's ideals, as well; in a life or death situation, other members may sacrifice their lives for the characters.

#### • Reputation

Some organizations open to scrutiny under the public eye establish reputations over time. These reputations may be advantageous to membership, or may act against them in some way. Use the point costs below as guidelines in determining the worth of your organization's reputation.

**Advantageous Rep (+3):** The organization is known to do good or to be of some benefit to society. Its members may be heralded in newspapers, or the mayor of a town may bestow some privilege upon the organization. Note, however, that ghosthunting organizations' reputations are not usually advantageous. Storytellers should feel free to adjust point costs according to the advantage that reputation gives the organization in question.

**Detrimental Rep (-3):** The organization is known as bizarre, a little frightening, or actively harmful to society. Police will give its members no quarter, and the general populace will treat members as nutcases. This is a common disadvantage for many ghosthunting organizations that do not hide their activities.

#### • Social Structure

When creating an organization, also think about its social structure. Ask yourself what characterizes the membership's social status. Think about the effect that combining social classes might have on it and the way its members might communicate, teach, work together, and blow off steam. How is any conflict handled? How does this relate to the ranking system that you chose for the organization in Step Two?

Intraorganizational relationships based on social structure partially determine how helpful or problematic the organization is when characters need something. If, for instance, the organization's membership is very competitive, it may be difficult for beginning characters to coax new equipment or knowledge from long-standing members; if the organization is more of a sorority or a fraternity, a communal spirit may exist between members. Once you have determined the organization's social structure, choose from the list of social advantages or disadvantages listed below, or devise another at the Storyteller's discretion.

**Competitive (-2):** Characters have a difficult time getting information, equipment, etc. out of more powerful members, who usually don't want to be upstaged by their youthful counterparts. Attempts to persuade members of competitive organizations to grant favors are met with increased difficulty (+1). Mentors with connections may



be useful in alleviating these problems, but competitiveness is still an organizational disadvantage.

**Accepting (0):** An ordinary organization having no outstanding social flaws and no social advantages. Members are considered pretty much equal, although they don't necessarily go out of their way to help other members.

**Helpful (+2):** Members of these organizations are generally more altruistic than most. Powerful members may help characters find the equipment they need, or intervene on behalf of the characters in sticky legal situations. Members view each other as equals, work well in teams, and lend a great deal of support — usually psychological, but sometimes financial. Attempts (from other members) to garner favors from members of these organizations are met with decreased difficulty (-1). Mentors are usually able to increase this benefit, but Storytellers are advised to keep this advantage in line with its point cost.

## Resources

### • Financial Resources

An organization may have some funds to its name, equivalent to the Resources Background (Chapter Three). The cost is two creation points per effective level of Resources. Note that this advantage does *not* grant each member Resources; it simply represents the funds the organization proper may possess, which probably require some bureaucratic work to access.

### • Laboratories

This category delineates the space available for occult experimentation. Labs are especially important for knowledge-seeking groups, although any organization may have them.

**None (0):** The organization has no labs. Creating equipment that perceives or manipulates the Restless is impossible.

**Inadequate (+2):** The organization has very limited occult laboratory facilities. The equipment is substandard, and is likely to produce successes only after years of experimentation — once a century.

**Adequate (+5):** The organization has good laboratory facilities with adequate machinery, nothing spectacular. Occult scientists are likely to make breakthroughs only once in twenty or thirty years.

**Superior (+10):** The organization has superior lab facilities and great equipment, giving members an edge in their experimentation. Occult scientists are likely to make a breakthrough once every decade.

**State-of-the-Art (+15):** The organization has the best facilities and equipment available. With some work, its scientists can make breakthroughs once every few years.

### • Occult Library

It is difficult for mortals to come by occult libraries. Acquisition of books about the Underworld without a lot of misinformation is almost a unique experience. Most

occult libraries contain 85% lies and 15% truth... if that. Nevertheless, mortals should feel grateful for even the little they are able to acquire, for such knowledge is extremely rare. While individuals may own personal occult libraries, it is far more common for organizations to have access to the important books on a topic, as organizations—and not individuals—have the resources with which to find (or finance the writing of) these books.

**Abysmal (-5):** The percentage of misinformation contained in the library's books is so high as to represent a disadvantage. Members reading these books and believing them are likely to get themselves into some dangerous situations.

**Poor (0):** The size of the library is so small that members must go elsewhere to conduct occult research.

**Modest (+5):** The organization's library is small and it has an equally small percentage of correct information. The point is, however, that it *has* correct information. Research rolls are difficulty 9, or 7 in a specific area of study (Storytellers should use some discretion here).

**Good (+10):** The organization's library is of medium size, and approximately 20% of the information in it is accurate. Research rolls are difficulty 8, or 6 in specific fields of inquiry.

**Exceptional (+15):** The organization's occult library is large and contains information which is approximately 40% accurate. Research rolls are difficulty 7, or 5 in specific areas of study.

**Overwhelming (+20):** The organization has a huge occult library, and the quality of the information is unlikely to be found anywhere else in the world (at least by ghosthunters). Information is about 60% accurate, and research rolls are difficulty 6, or 3 in particular areas of study.

#### • Talismans

Organizations sometimes possess talismans discovered, appropriated, or created by one or more of its members. This advantage allows appropriate organizations to purchase different levels of talismans. Players should detail the charter rules concerning members' use of organization-owned talismans—even incredibly powerful organizations do not distribute talismans to every member! Also remember that an organization's Social Structure and Internal Politics may influence the availability of this item. Talismans cost 5 points per level. For more information on talisman levels, see "Enchantment" in Chapter Three.

#### • Organization Contacts

Certain organizations may have contacts as a whole, rather than or in addition to the contacts that individual members maintain. Spies, for instance, may report to any member of the organization if it is small, or channelers may work with organization members to whom they are assigned. Organization Contacts cost 2 points per Major Contact. The Contacts rules in **Wraith** apply.

## Step Four: Headquarters

Using "construction points," you can create your own ghosthunting headquarters. In order to do so, players should purchase the Home Base Background for their characters, then use the points to buy some of the advantages described below. Players may combine construction points in order to build a communal headquarters. As aforementioned, the total disadvantages taken from the list below should not be worth more than half of the total spent on advantages.

Players may spend construction points to purchase the advantages that follow, and earn construction points by taking some of the following disadvantages, up to half the total of the points spent on headquarters advantages. Note that "construction points" differ from "creation points," as they cannot be spent on anything other than advantages for an organization's headquarters. Likewise, creation points cannot be used to purchase headquarters advantages.

### Home Base: A New Background

Most organizations require a regular meeting place or a base of operations in which to carry out the duties and goals of the organization. Many such locales have blessings or wards placed upon them, in addition to modern security measures, to protect them from hostile or mischievous supernatural entities.

Players may combine their Home Base Backgrounds to create an organization headquarters. This Background reflects the funding, human resources and other reserves that the characters are able to contribute (influence in the real estate industry, and so on). Should the player characters leave the organization to which they donated their construction points, they may not take the points with them. However, upon leaving an organization, any unspent experience® may be used to purchase more points in Home Base, which may be applied to the creation of a new organization (or donated to an existing one).

- 1 construction point
- 2 construction points
- 3 construction points
- 4 construction points
- 5 construction points

## Grounds

### • Land Status

Reflects the status of the property on which the headquarters is located. Does the building belong to the organization? Does the organization lease its building? This could lead to no end of complications....

**Large Private Holding (+5):** The headquarters rests in the center of a very large tract of land. The actual size is determined by the surroundings; i.e., 10 square miles of rain forest, 500 acres in a rural area, or one city block.

**Privately Owned (+0):** The headquarters belongs to one ghastly hunter in the organization (not necessarily a player character). If the hunter leaves the organization, she can kick the organization out. She could also will it to an individual who might not be as generous....

**Leased (variable):** The hunters do not actually own the area in which the headquarters is located. It is leased to them for 10 years (-2), 5 years (-5), or 1 year (-7).

**Well-Documented (-1):** The place is documented in a number of reputable occult sources and may be pestered by the curious.

### • Secret Location

Secret Location functions as an insurance policy for secret organizations. The greater the secrecy that surrounds the location of the headquarters, the smaller the chances

that outsiders (both living and dead) will discover it. Of course, there is no magic involved; if someone does discover it, he can tell others where it lies. A secret location simply determines how well-hidden the headquarters is.

**Hidden (+2):** The average person couldn't find it. (+1 difficulty)

**Obscure (+3):** A private detective would have difficulty finding it. (+2 difficulty)

**Confidential (+4):** Sherlock Holmes might have some difficulty. (+3 difficulty)

**Top secret (+5):** James Bond would have some trouble; not only is the headquarters impossible to reach for most people, it is also camouflaged as something completely different from what it is. (+4 difficulty)

### • Size

The size of a headquarters has some bearing on the activities that may be conducted within. For instance, it would be difficult to hold an Orphic Great Festival in a shack or to conduct classes of more than ten people in a small office. This advantage allows you to buy (or get refunded for) just the right size building for your organization's needs.

**Small (-2):** An outhouse, a small rented office, a large closet, a van, etc.





**Average (0):** A medium office, a cramped house or shack, etc.

**Large (+2):** A house, small building, two floors of small offices, etc.

**Impressive (+5):** A mansion, a full office building (multiple floors; ordinary offices), small monastery, etc.

**Huge (+10):** A military base, a large monastery, a campus, etc.

## Defenses

### • Fortification

This characteristic details the headquarters' general resistance to physical attack. While not a major concern for most organizations, fortification is necessary for those who have made a lot of enemies and need to find a good place to dig in. Fortification might derive from a secure location atop a hill, thick walls, natural obstacles, or some sort of paranormal defenses directed against physical, not ghostly, intruders. The exact game effects depend upon the nature of the fortification, but Storytellers should take the level of defense into account by levying penalties against attacking forces or by assigning high difficulties to destructive actions.

**Poorly Fortified (-5):** The headquarters has no natural or artificial defenses. It is a sitting duck.

**Average Fortification (0):** The headquarters has a few advantages to its position, allowing it to be defended with some work.

**Well-Fortified (+5):** A pretty tough place.

**Mighty (+10):** Strong defenses.

**Impregnable (+15):** Damn near impossible to breach.

### • Guards

Very few ghosthunting organizations are affluent enough to hire professional guards to watch their headquarters, or bodyguards to protect their leaders. Still, if your organization is one of those that can, you may choose from among the advantages below (they are cumulative). Note that this advantage includes situations in which members (but not necessarily characters) serve as guards.

**Number of Guards (+2):** Ordinary mortal guards with one special level 3 skill or piece of equipment (such as Brawl 3, or a gun) and normal mortal stats. Cost is 2 points per guard. You may also want to detail who these guards are and what they know, as this may play a role in certain adventures.

**Enhancements (variable):** The following represent enhancements you can give to your organization's guards.

**• Numina (+7 per level):** For example, a mortal guard with Telekinesis 2 would cost a total of 16 points.



• Loyalty (variable): Costs as per "Loyalty" above. This merit or flaw applies only to guards who are not members of the organization.

- Security System

Headquarters may have traps or detection devices that are designed to protect them from invasion. While traps prevent physical intruders from proceeding, security systems do not prevent entry; they simply alert the headquarters to intrusion. Security systems are further detailed in the Appendix. (Note that security systems do not generally detect ghosts.) Obviously, a group can take a trap system as well as a security system; the two are not exclusive.

**Simple Trap System (+5):** The headquarters has a system of mechanical traps. These catch any intruder who fails a Perception + Alertness roll (difficulty 7). The intruder is detained until freed or until she breaks loose through brute strength (Strength Feat of 8).

**Complex Trap System (+10):** Treat as above, except the difficulty is raised to 8 and the roll must be made every turn or so. Breaking free is a Strength Feat of 11.

**Low-Grade Security System (+2):** The headquarters has some sort of warning system against intruders. Intruders must make one Perception + Stealth roll (difficulty 7) to avoid alerting guards (or members).

**Average Security System (+5):** As above, but the roll must be made once per turn whenever the intruder moves about.

**State-of-the-Art Security System (+10):** Same as Average Security System, but the difficulty is 8, and all the occupants of the headquarters are alerted.

- Wardings

The headquarters is protected by a warding, preventing ghosts from entering (for more details, see *Wraith*, pages 234-235). The organization is presumed to have someone capable of erecting and maintaining these wards (requiring at least Occult 3). The cost is 10 or 15 points, depending on the Willpower of the person (or people) in charge of maintaining the warding, and how easily the warding can be disrupted.

### Unusual

- Atmosphere

The location of the headquarters has a certain ambiance about it that either comforts or disconcerts anyone who spends time there. Depending upon the number of points spent, the atmosphere may increase clientele over time or convince meddling youths to stay away from the secret base.

**3 points:** The atmosphere is either calming or disturbing (-1 to difficulty of convincing others to stay or go — not both)

**4 points:** Peaceful/Spooky (-2 difficulty)

**5 points:** Pacific/Agitating (-3 difficulty)

**6 points:** Tranquilizing/Alarming (-4 difficulty)

**7 points:** Heavenly/Hellish (-5 difficulty)

Note that these difficulties are always used against a target's Willpower.

#### • Psychic/Magical Interference

Some locations mystically lend themselves to psychic or magical interference, increasing the difficulty of Numina rolls (for Occult Magic and Psychic Phenomena) made in these areas. You may buy this disadvantage twice: once for psychic interference and once for magical interference, if you wish. This is only a disadvantage if the organization purchasing headquarters in this locale has a predominantly psychic membership and/or its members habitually use magic. If your organization does not meet these qualifications, then this interference does not represent a disadvantage and you cannot get points for such a location.

**Weak Interference (-2):** Interference increases the difficulty of all Psychic Phenomena or Occult Magic rolls by 1.

**Strong Interference (-4):** Difficulty of these rolls increases by 2.

**Powerful Interference (-6):** Numina are impossible to perform at these locations.

#### • Phenomena

These characteristics reflect paranormal phenomena in or around the headquarters. These phenomena may have many causes, including the possibility that the headquarters has been built near or upon a Haunt (a fact the organization is unlikely to understand).

**Curse (Mild or Severe):** The area is cursed for some reason, and has some terrible effect on those who visit. Severely cursed areas may even punish those members of the organization who work at the headquarters. The Storyteller should decide the severity and effect of the curse, taking into account the disadvantage's bonus. Mild curses are -5 points; Severe curses are -10.

**Dark Secret (-2):** The curse may be lifted if someone discovers the mysterious cause of the curse. Treat as a mild curse until then.

**Haunted (-5):** The headquarters is plagued with the Restless. They may disrupt the organization's daily business, steal items, interrupt classes or experiments, or vandalize property. If they seek to maim or kill anyone in the headquarters, this disadvantage is worth -10 points.

**Nihil (-10):** The headquarters is located in the same place where a substantial Nihil exists in the Shadowlands. The headquarters is plagued by Spectres, and possessions are not quite common, but frequent. Other creatures of the Void may appear from time to time as well, and they do not always leave the membership behind....

#### • Miscellaneous

Storytellers should allow the following miscellaneous advantages only under advisement, as they involve magic more advanced than that possessed by the vast majority of ghosthunting organizations.

**Ritual Access (+15):** Some Ritual is necessary to use or enter the headquarters; the ignorant are kept out by something much like a warding.

**Special Portal (variable):** The headquarters has some special mystical gateway linking it to the Underworld. This gateway requires a special Ritual or keyword to open it. Cost is ten to fifteen points depending on the importance of the portal and where it leads.

## Example Organization Cost



Let's say your Storyteller gave you 15 creation points to create a new organization. You and two other players also bought a total of 5 construction points in the Home Base Background, so that you could have a headquarters (you bought Home Base 2, and the two other players bought Home Base 1 and 2 for a total of 5 points).

After answering the questions in Step Two, you would skim through the ideas in Steps Three and Four to find those advantages and disadvantages that mesh with your organization's concept. Next, you would allocate your creation points, then your construction points. The following is an example of how you could allocate those points:

### ORGANIZATION ASPECTS: 15 points

| Points | Advantages/Disadvantages                 |
|--------|--|
| 6      | Formal Training: Blacksmithing (level 2) |
| 2      | Knowledge Req.: Computer (level 1)       |
| 10     | Cauls required                           |
| 5      | Wise leadership                          |
| 2      | Inadequate labs                          |
| -5     | Sects                                    |
| -5     | Disorganized                             |

15 creation points (25 ads / 10 disads)

### HEADQUARTERS: 5 Points

| Points | Advantages/Disadvantages        |
|--------|---------------------------------|
| 2      | One guard with gun              |
| 2      | Hidden base                     |
| 5      | Average security system         |
| -4     | Magical interference (diff. +2) |

5 construction points (9 ads / 4 disads)



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# Appendix

## Ghosthunting Equipment



unting the Restless is by far one of the hardest hunting tasks for mortals to undertake. Vampires, werewolves, and even mages are more easily engaged because they have a physical existence. Ghosts exist somewhere else entirely and, because of this, ghosthunters often find themselves relying heavily upon gear that allows them to perceive and touch an Underworld that is denied to their physical senses. Listed below are items treasured by ghosthunters, some of which themselves could become the bases for ghosthunting chronicles.

### High Tech Gear

#### Ectoplasmic Converter Engine

ECEs have just been invented by the scientists of the Alternate Energy Group and, while not yet perfected, the one that has been tested has worked reliably thus far. Using the principles of high-energy conversion, the ECE collides atomic particles in certain ratios to produce and trap energy. By doing so, an ECE senses and converts ghosts within ten feet of it to a detectable and heretofore un-

known form of energy that the AEG has not yet been able to use. It is unknown if the ghosts so converted retain their self-awareness or are psychically dismembered by the process.

Using an ECE is not an easy task. The machine itself is bulky (about 7 feet long and 3 feet high), heavy (300 pounds), and must be rolled about on casters. It is highly sensitive to moisture and needs on-site calibration every time it is transported. Worse yet, much of the finer calibration work can only be done at the lab. The battery pack that allows it to operate outside the lab is almost as heavy as the machine itself. (Under no circumstances could scientists transporting an ECE attempt a Stealth roll!) Furthermore, operating the ECE requires an in-depth knowledge of physics and a lot of patience for calibration work.

To sense ghosts within ten feet of an ECE, players first must calibrate the machine (Dexterity + Physics, difficulty 7). Next, they roll the ECE's Perception rating (the current model only has a Perception of 1) plus any successes in their calibration roll vs. the Shroud rating where the ECE is located. For every success, the ECE perceives one of the ghosts present, if any (also remember that they have to be within 10 feet of the machine in order to be detected). Failure means no ghosts were detected, even if some were

around, while a botch means the machine is broken and has to be taken back to the lab to be repaired.

In order to convert ghosts to energy, the ECE must get a lock-on, which means it must first perceive a ghost (as above) and then target it (Dexterity + Firearms, difficulty 7). Next, the ECE rolls its Strength (current models have a rating of 2) plus the number of targeting successes versus the difficulty of the ghost's Stamina + 3. With one success, the ghost's energy is converted and trapped in the ECE, dissipating at a rate of 20% per hour. Every success thereafter stalls the dissipation process by an hour. Failure means that the ECE either converted the ghost but failed to trap its energy or did not get the ghost at all. A botch means the conversion process flooded the trapping tank, the machine catches fire, and all energy contained in the tank escapes in a great explosion.

### Kirlian Camera

Kirlian photography induces the production of auralike corona patterns through use of a high-frequency electronic discharge. The technique was originally developed in the 1800s, but Soviet electrician Semyon Kirlian perfected it in the 1940s. The method is not fully accepted by academic parapsychologists, but ghosthunters with the appropriate resources have made use of the cameras. Kirlian photography has not advanced much since the '40s, but the organizations that use it find that it is fairly successful.

This "spirit photography" focuses on the target wraith's Corpus and Pathos, and is also affected by the Shroud. If the wraith has high ratings in both Traits, and the Shroud is very thin (say, in a Haunt on Halloween), the image may be fairly distinct (facial features dimly discernible, etc.). If any factor is less than ideal, the image may be blurry, or not visible at all. Bear in mind that you usually must be able to see a ghost before you can photograph it.

Kirlian photography can also be used to read the auras of more corporeal beings. This may serve to expose a person's emotional state, but will not reveal whether or not she is supernatural. (An Intelligence + Occult roll is necessary to interpret the picture properly.)

A Kirlian camera is a large view camera, and must be steadied with a tripod for the longer-than-usual exposure times required. Any shaking of the camera might blur the picture, and thus destroy its value as proof. Each (very expensive) roll of film will take about 10 shots. An experimental Kirlian video camera is also in use, although very rare. It weighs about 25 lbs., is somewhat bulky, and also requires a tripod. One tape holds about half an hour of recording time.

Obviously, wraiths cannot be captured on normal film unless Embodied, and even then the camera must be very good (expensive) and very fast (more expensive).

### Remote Database Terminal

This is a laptop-sized portable computer with a backpack-style satellite link-up antenna. It is capable of tapping into communication satellites and, through them, accessing many of the United States' top information mainframes, including the computers owned and maintained by such organizations as the NSA and the FBI. Mere possession of the remote terminal will not grant access to these storehouses of information; one must also have knowledge of the proper passwords and access codes.

### Religious Gear

In order for ghosthunters to use the religious gear that follows, they must have a Faith rating equal to the item's *within the same faith*. Without these prerequisites, the item will fail to work, work at less than maximum efficiency, or actively do them harm.

#### Holy Symbol (Faith 1)

Tertullians and members of other faiths use holy symbols to channel the energies of their faith. In the Shadowlands, these symbols all appear differently (those of Tertullians appear encrusted with a writhing, green, algae-like substance). The truly faithful can use holy symbols as weapons, doing Strength -1 damage (difficulty 7).

#### Tertullian Holy Water (Faith 1)

When dabbed on the eyes and brow, the Tertullians' holy water allows them to see creatures from the Shadowlands (including wraiths) for one scene on a successful Faith roll (difficulty 6). The water feels icy cold to anyone without Faith.

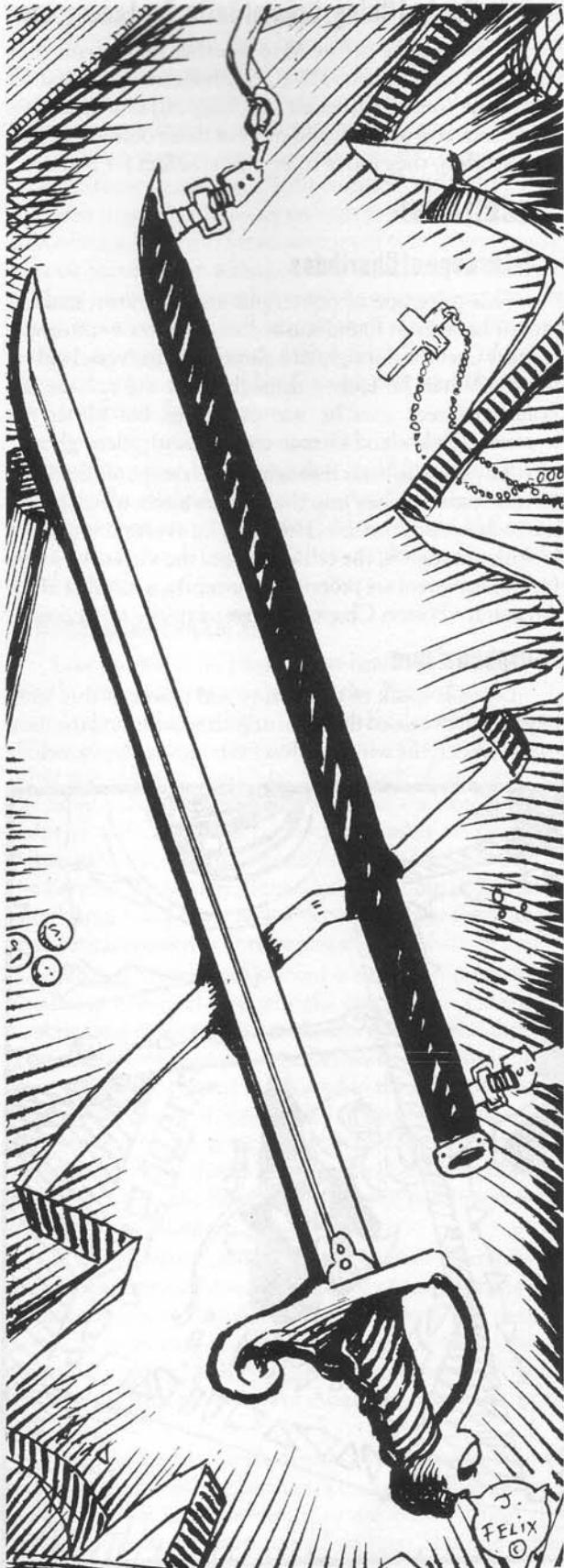
#### Sword of St. James (Faith 3)

A Sword of St. James is a sword carefully crafted by a member of the Sect of St. James. Each sword is unique, but when wielded by its creator, the weapon can do severe harm to all "unholy" creatures.

The sword does Strength + 3 damage (difficulty 6) and can only be properly wielded by its creator. Others of sufficient Faith may use the item, but it is clumsy and awkward in their hands (difficulty 9). Anyone with less than three dots in Faith who attempts to use such a weapon immediately becomes violently nauseous, suffers an epileptic seizure, or otherwise finds herself incapacitated for a turn. Even if using Puppetry, wraiths attempting to use such a weapon must fail an Angst check or experience Catharsis.

#### Liknon (Faith 2)

The liknon is an oblong basket of wickerwork filled with fruit or corn and chaff and covered with a cloth from which protrudes what looks like a phallus; it is an ancient symbol of fertility mythically invested with the power of Dionysus. To the Orphic Circle, however, the liknon is of more than just historical interest; it is a holy symbol.



Unlike the holy symbols mentioned above, however, it cannot be used to harm wraiths. Rather, it is used to reinvest them with a sense of the vitality they had in life. Performing the liknon Ritual (usually involving orgiastic behavior, dancing, and feasting), Orphics roll their Faith rating (difficulty 2) to cause all ghosts within ten feet of them to feel reinvigorated. For the rest of the scene, affected wraiths have an extra Pathos to spend (which they usually indulge in Puppetry). For every Faith point above two, the area of effect increases by ten feet. The liknon may also be used to cause sexual passions to arise in mortals (Faith rating vs. subject's Willpower, although Orphics rarely practice this on non-Orphics outside of the liknon Ritual).

### Cosmogonic Egg (Faith 1+)

The cosmogonic egg is another historical symbol of life, the universe, and everything. Orphics see it as the highest holy symbol of their religion and believe that the great Orphic Oracles of legend used it to resurrect the dead (this ability, if it ever existed, is now long lost). Nowadays, the egg is used to channel the sicknesses of the living into the Underworld, thereby healing them. What most Orphics do not know is that the process adheres to a sort of law of conservation of mass — the sickness is thrust out of the living body, gets translated into its spiritual equivalent, and afflicts an innocent wraith in the process (if a wraith is not nearby, the healing attempt fails). Generally, the higher the faith, the more serious the sickness that may be healed. Orphics use the stone egg by holding it against the part of the body needing healing while uttering a healing chant (roll Faith vs. the difficulty of the sickness to be healed and expend one Willpower point per level of difficulty starting at five). For instance, to cure diabetes, the Orphic healer would have to spend four Willpower.

### Sickness Chart

#### Illness

#### Difficulty

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Headaches, backaches, minor pains              | 5 |
| Migraine, sprain, flu, minor infections        | 6 |
| Common cold, broken bones, deep wounds         | 7 |
| Chronic diseases (diabetes, asthma, arthritis) | 8 |
| AIDS, cancer, meningitis                       | 9 |

## Ordinary Gear

### Sound-Activated Tape Recorder

Taping sounds emitted by ghosts haunting a locale is another means commonly employed by ghosthunters to obtain solid evidence of hauntings. Although easily faked, the eeriness (especially when wraiths are Keening) of the recorded sounds nevertheless wins over believers and helps ghosthunters who cannot keep a location under 24 hour surveillance determine which spots are most likely to be haunted.

### Motion Detectors

Some detectors are capable of picking up evidence of the presence of ghosts when mortals are not around to scout for them, but only if that evidence involves physical characteristics manifested by the ghost. Motion detectors may sense objects being moved about using Outrage or Inhabit, for instance, but they cannot sense the wraiths doing the moving.

### Amphed Patch

This patch of amphetamines ensures that the hunter can stay awake for approximately 24 straight hours without any difficulty. It is applied directly to the skin and is used when the hunter simply must remain awake for whatever reason (if, for example, she has a Sandman after her).

### Tarot Cards, I Ching, Crystal Balls, Tea Leaves, etc.

There is some debate as to whether these items truly constitute occult gear. Most ghosthunters agree that an item is not considered occult (i.e., magical) gear unless it is magical in and of itself, and most of these objects are not. Nonetheless, they prove to be effective foci for Numina.

### Occult Gear

#### Telescope of Charibdes

This telescope of mysterious and unknown make is said to have been found washed ashore after a sixteenth-century Greek sailor sighted a ghostly foreign vessel sailing nearby. When he looked through it, he did not see the beautiful Greek isles he was expecting, but rather the overcast Shadowland Greece teeming with silent ghosts.

Anyone who looks through the Telescope of Charibdes can automatically see into the Shadowlands, which is why it is such a prized treasure. However, for every minute spent looking through it, the telescope ages the viewer by a year (portions thereof are prorated). Currently, a member of the Arcanum's Boston Chapter House owns the telescope.

#### Orpheus' Lyre

Legends speak of the beauty and power of this lyre's music, which caused the ancient gods to weep and the dead to rise. When the wind touches its strings, it plays a melody



sweeter than mortal imagining. Anyone finding this lyre (currently believed to have been swept into Arcadia) and wishing to play it must first expend two Willpower points to prevent themselves from being transfixed by its beauty. Drawing one's fingers across its strings produces a haunting melody that attracts and transfixes ghosts (they may attempt to resist by making a Willpower roll, difficulty 8). At the same time, wraiths lucky enough to become transfixed gain a Fetter (the lyre) for an amount of time in years equal to their successes on a Passion roll (difficulty 7). Because the Lyre evokes Passions that resonate with a person's inner being, wraiths usually roll against their strongest Passions — thus, a transfixed wraith with a Faith Passion of 4 who obtained one success on her Passion roll could have the Lyre as a Fetter for one year.

Obviously, Orpheus' Lyre is a powerful piece of ghosthunting gear, something that could form the basis for an entire chronicle. In fact, it is an Artifact of legend even among Stygian wraiths, many of whom would like to get their hands on it so that they could return to the Shadowlands.

### Benandanti Fennel Sword

Like Swords of St. James, these beautiful hand-crafted swords are unique expressions of the Benandanti's individual relationship with the Underworld. Level 5 or higher talismans, they cause aggravated damage to Spectres and other spirits of the Void. The mere touch of this sword in the Skinlands can exorcise the spirits of the dead. Unlike ordinary talismans, which "burn out" after several uses, Benandanti swords are powered for a year from the date of the Forging. Thereafter, Benandanti must dip their fennel swords in a Nihil every new moon to repower them, or go to the inconvenience of reforging the sword altogether.

While a Benandante's sword is extremely powerful, it also has its drawbacks: because the sword causes damage to Spectres and other malevolent Underworld spirits, dipping it into Nihils may endanger the Benandante. Additionally, these swords are Named and bound to the existence of the Benandante owner; if Spectres (or any other creature) ever discover that Name, great harm can be done to the creator of the sword. Some shades have Rituals that make use of the Name to possess the Benandante or even pull him unwillingly into the Tempest.

A fennel sword (talisman level 5) does Strength + 3 points of aggravated damage (difficulty 6) to Spectres and other creatures of Oblivion. To wraiths with five to nine points of temporary or permanent Angst, a fennel sword causes Strength + 1 points of aggravated damage (difficulty 6). Wraiths with ten points of Angst are treated as Spectres.

Used in the Skinlands, fennel swords have a 90 percent chance of breaking because of necessary physical flaws in their construct. However, they are useful against the spirits of the dead (particularly Spectres) Skinriding the

Quick. A touch of the sword against a host, and the ghost is usually exorcised from him. The Benandante rolls Willpower + sword's talisman level - 4 (with a maximum total of 10) vs. the ghost's Willpower. The ghost is expelled from its host's body (which is considered mystically purified) for an hour per success. If the ghost wins, it still must expend a Willpower point to stay in the host's body.

For instance, the Benandante Peredur rolls his Willpower  $7 + 1 = 8$  vs. a Skinriding Spectre's Willpower of 8. With two successes, the Spectre cannot return to that body for another two hours. A botch means that the host has taken two points of damage.

On the down side, if the sword is ever broken, the Benandante automatically loses three points of Willpower (yet another reason not to risk using it in the Skinlands) because of his mystical connection to it. Furthermore, ghosts (and other creatures, including humans) may use the Name of the sword to summon, possess, trap, or otherwise incapacitate a Benandante by rolling their Wits + Ritual vs. the Benandante's Willpower. All such Rituals involve repetition of the sword's Name.

## Security Systems



layers or Storytellers wishing to create a headquarters with security systems may use the information that follows as a reference point.

### High Tech Systems

Most advanced security systems are audiovisual, comprised of cameras, closed-circuit televisions, and microphones. Mikes are often tuned to pick up certain sounds (breaking glass, voices, etc.). In general, systems come in two types: on/off and perception-based.

#### On/Off Sensors

On/off sensors do not require a roll to detect something. They either trigger or they don't. For instance, a window breakage sensor will trigger if the window is broken. An electric eye will go off only if the light beam is broken. There are no rolls for these sensors. The Storytellers must have the players describe their actions very carefully, and the sensors respond accordingly.

#### Perception-Based Sensors

These sensors have a Perception Attribute which is used in the same manner as a character's Attribute. For example, a thermal sensor might have a Perception rating of 8. The sensor will roll eight dice (difficulty 6) to detect a character and trigger an alarm. Obviously, an intruder would have to be emitting heat for this thermal sensor to detect him; a ghost would not set off the alarm (unless using Materialize), but a skinridden consort might, assuming the consort were an ordinary heat-emitting mortal.

## Security Systems Chart

| Sensors          | Perception |
|------------------|------------|
| Microwave Sensor | 8          |
| Motion Sensor    | 6          |
| Ward             | 5+         |
| Barriers         | Strength   |
| Window           | 1          |
| Door (wood)      | 3          |
| Door (metal)     | 5          |
| Door Lock        | 2-5        |
| Wall (cement)    | 9          |
| Bulkhead         | 13         |

**Perception:** The Dice Pool used to detect intruders.

**Strength:** The Dice Pool (see the Strength Chart in *Wraith: The Oblivion*, p. 212) required to break through the barrier.

## Magical Security Systems

Normally only the oldest and most powerful ghosthunting organizations are capable of erecting magical wards in their headquarters which alert members to the presence of ghosts. Typically, wards such as these are fragile and very limited in what they can detect. Storytellers should require players to record these limitations and how the wards themselves may be destroyed.

For instance, a ward used to detect the presence of wraiths cannot be used to detect Spectres, and vice versa; each entity emits a mystically different type of energy (of course, talented Doppelgangers can disguise even their energy patterns...). A ward such as this is a level two (or higher) talisman created using the rules for Fetishism (see "Numina," Chapter 5). The higher the talisman level, the better its Perception rating, starting at a Dice Pool of 5. It may take whatever form that the Ritual prescribes for it, but will only last as long in weeks as the successes rolled while creating it plus its level. Obviously, to have continued security surveillance, a ghosthunting organization must be fairly proficient in the use of Enchantment (or its True Faith equivalent). Moreover, because the device must touch the Underworld in order to perceive it, it can also be destroyed almost as easily by the Underworld's inhabitants (who must roll Strength vs. the talisman's Dice Pool + successes in creating it) as by physical beings.

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# THE CLICK & THE DEAD

## — Other Traits —

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## — Associates —

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## Goals

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## Description

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Age \_\_\_\_\_ Height \_\_\_\_\_  
Hair \_\_\_\_\_ Weight \_\_\_\_\_  
Eyes \_\_\_\_\_ Identifying Marks \_\_\_\_\_  
Sex \_\_\_\_\_ Nationality \_\_\_\_\_

## Equipment

|                     | Rank | Roll | Difficulty |
|---------------------|------|------|------------|
| Gear (carried)      |      |      |            |
|                     |      |      |            |
|                     |      |      |            |
|                     |      |      |            |
| Possessions (owned) |      |      |            |
|                     |      |      |            |
|                     |      |      |            |
|                     |      |      |            |

## History

### Prelude

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### Home

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### Talismans

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### Contacts/Allies

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### Brawling Chart

| Maneuver  | Roll        | Diff | Damage       |
|-----------|-------------|------|--------------|
| Body Slam | Dex + Brawl | 7    | Special      |
| Grapple   | Dex + Brawl | 6    | Strength     |
| Kick      | Dex + Brawl | 7    | Strength + 1 |
| Punch     | Dex + Brawl | 6    | Strength     |

### Rank

### Roll

### Difficulty

# Grave Goods



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